

## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

### **Rudolf Laban in the 21st Century: A Brazilian Perspective**

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**Rudolf Laban in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Brazilian Perspective**

**By**

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degree of PhD**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is a practitioner's perspective on the field of movement studies initiated by the European artist-researcher Rudolf Laban (1879-1958) and its particular context in Brazil. Not only does it examine the field of knowledge that Laban proposed alongside his collaborators, but it considers the voices of Laban practitioners in Brazil as evidence of the contemporary practices developed in the field.

As a modernist artist and researcher Rudolf Laban initiated a heritage of movement studies focussed on investigating the artistic expression of human beings, which still reverberates in the work of artists and scholars around the world. Thus my research is shaped by an investigation into the experience of the field's practitioners, and how their activities shape the materialisation of Laban's discourse nowadays. In this sense, not only their experience but also my own (as a Laban-practitioner myself) were the main materials and sources for my investigation.

From this material I asked questions regarding the landscape of Laban practices in Brazil and the contemporaneity of Laban's discourse. To develop this study I initiated an oral history project (collecting narratives from Brazilian practitioners), which evolved into an ethnography of the international and Brazilian field of Laban studies. In fact my intense participation and individual exploration of Laban praxis shaped my methods to articulate an embodied debate of the field. As a 'history of the present' based on individual and collective experiences, this study draws on Foucault to drive a critical perspective on the material and to finally debate the authorship of Laban's discourse.

This thesis thus starts with an overview of Laban studies. It then narrows down to consider the scape of Laban practices in Brazil, detailing the work of three local artists. While submerging myself in the field's practices and theories and the lives of the Brazilian Laban-practitioners, I found that the work that is developed outside the United-States and European circle of practice and research may provide clues for a valuable understanding of the materiality of Laban's discourse in the twenty-first century. Thus, this study proposes that practitioners who are engaged with the (constant) development of Laban studies can potentially be considered as (co-)authors of Laban praxis as it emerges in Brazil and worldwide.

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There is 'only love'.



## **List of abbreviations**

These abbreviations are presented by the literature itself. They are not my abbreviation of the terms I encountered by how specific methods, institutions and associations have abbreviated their names.

AM – Authentic Movement

BMC – Body Mind Centring

CMA – Certified Movement Analyst

CNPq – Brazil National Research Council

DMT – Dance Movement Therapy

DNB – Dance Notation Bureau

HE – Higher Education

ICKL – International Council of Kinetography Laban

KMP – Kestenberg Movement Profile

LIMS – Laban Institute of Movement Studies

LMA – Laban Movement Analysis

MP/MPA – Movement Pattern Analysis

NRCD – National Resource Centre for Dance

NYU – New York University

PUC-SP – Sao Paulo Catholic University

UFBA – Federal University of Bahia

UNICAMP – State University of Campinas

SDCS – Specialist Diploma in Choreological Studies

SRP – Somatic Performative Research

USP – State University of São Paulo

## Introduction

This thesis is about the contemporary articulations of the work, or 'praxis', of the European modernist artist and researcher Rudolf Laban, with a particular focus on its establishment in Brazil. The thesis will examine the general and specific scenarios of Laban practice in Brazil, attending to how the understanding of its history can illuminate contemporary activities that involve Laban's philosophy and movement principles. I will show how the practices that emerge from a cultural specific realm inform the understanding of Laban's heritage of movement studies.

Rudolf Laban developed a wide-ranging field of knowledge in dance, theatre and movement studies which, for more than a century, has been widely investigated and further disseminated through the practices of a great number of artists and researchers worldwide (Preston-Dunlop, 1998b: 273). Laban's body of work is vast, encompassing a variety of fields and disciplines. He developed his praxis into different strands of movement practice, each focussing on specific aspects of his heritage. The main ones are: Choreology (Choreutics and Eukinetics), Notation, *Tanztheater* and educational dance.

Laban's life has been scrutinised by diverse historians and practitioners with papers about his persona dating from the first half of the 20th century (Dörr, 2008). Nonetheless, in the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, discussions over Laban's life continue to be in fashion, revealing different archival reminiscences and assumptions about his overall life and work. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century important debates on Laban's life and political inclinations were introduced (Karina and Kant, 2004; Kew, 1999; Vertinsky, 2005). Yet, despite the considerable number of discussions, histories and biographies on Laban's achievements, no one has yet produced a thorough critique of the overall field composed of the discourse Laban envisioned. In this sense, each individual strand that emerged from Laban praxis has been developing scholarship in isolated networks that more often than not lack international circulation and critique. Furthermore there has been a scarcity

of scholarship that investigates Laban praxis across its multiple strands. Thus, most of the existing publications refer to individual strands of Laban praxis and not the overall heritage of the field. In addition, the existing scholarship that has international circulation reveals the predominance of English literature and practice, often entirely disregarding an accurate perspective of the field's global activity (as I argue in Chapter One).

## **1. Research Territory**

My first and foremost concern has been to look at the field of Laban studies<sup>1</sup> in Brazil, where I have trained as a dancer, scholar and Laban-practitioner. My initial interest lay in mapping out local practitioners and their background in Laban studies. This impetus revealed a large number of artists scattered around the country who cite Laban's name as part of their individual working framework.<sup>2</sup> From this preliminary research, I selected and interviewed thirty practitioners. This survey revealed that Laban's discourse has been represented in Brazil since the 1930's. From this preliminary data, I have advanced my enquiry to include an international understanding of the field in order to compare my findings in Brazil with the global sphere of Laban-related practices. I also narrow my focus to feature the work of three of the most prominent contemporary Laban practitioners in Brazil: Ciane Fernandes, Lenira Rengel and Regina Miranda. The simultaneous consideration of the international field and the focus on specific case studies of Brazilian practitioners allows me to establish links between the local and the global field of Laban studies.

Alongside my interest in these particular practitioners, the motivation to develop this research lies in my increasing interest in Laban praxis alongside the politics in the field. The difficulty in accessing the field in Brazil (as the Laban practitioners seldom collaborate with each other and there is no organisation that gathers them all), as well as the controversies revealed by the practitioners within the local context has required a careful investigation of the characteristics of 'Laban in Brazil'. The small number of local

publications and translations (into Portuguese) of Laban's books added to the difficulty in accessing international literature constructed the scenario. From the existing publications, many have not been reprinted and are unavailable at public libraries in Brazil. Thus, this demonstrates that there is a significant gap in Brazilian scholarship that provides a critical understanding of practices in the field of Laban studies. In addition, apart from the usual praising of Laban's endeavour, the voices and experiences of the practitioners in the field are not widely documented, and even less so are the experiences of practitioners who are not members of institutions that grant official Laban diplomas.

Furthermore, there has been hardly any study that discusses the transmission of Laban praxis, the development of heritages of practice, and the consequences of the global practice of Laban's philosophy. These issues have been poorly discussed in final remarks in works on Laban's life (such as Bradley, 2009; Preston-Dunlop, 1998b). Such studies that do promise to give overviews of local practices (Ashley, 2010; Huberman, 2010; Leon, 2010; Swann, 2010) often lack meticulous research and referencing, providing dubious scenarios of international Laban practices. Thus, it becomes evident that there is a gap in the understanding of Laban studies' outreach including the scarcity of rigorous discussion of its character, transmission and cultural-specific incorporation.

Besides, there is no discussion that articulates across different strands of Laban praxis the developments in the field and their connection to Laban's heritage. This means that despite the individual endeavours of well-known practitioners (such as Bartenieff, 1980; Hackney, 2010; Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2010), there is no consensus regarding what is and what is not Laban praxis within a contemporary framework.

In light of the gaps in the field of Laban studies outlined above, this project aims to provide a perspective on how Laban's praxis stands contemporarily giving voice to the practitioners who have materialised Laban praxis keeping its heritage through generations of practitioners in Brazil. Through the analysis of the heritages of different strands of Laban's discourse I draw an understanding of how Laban praxis has been disseminated through generations of artists and exists today in the practices of a range of people

worldwide. Thus, from this standpoint I can consider and evaluate the work emerging in Brazil and its associations with Laban's discourse.

## **2. Research Timeframe and Problem**

This research began in 2007 and stretched until 2015, and has developed in two parts<sup>3</sup>. The first took place between 2007 and 2009 when I carried out an oral history project to investigate the Brazilian practitioners working with Laban praxis.<sup>4</sup> From 2010 the research continued as a PhD study where I focussed on the specific work of three practitioners and developed a critical perspective of their activities and the overall field of Laban studies.

The above timeframe shapes the core of this thesis. This means that the data collected and used as primary sources corresponds to these periods. Indeed my primary sources are the voices and experiences of practitioners (Brazilian and international). This condition is evidenced in my general argument where, based on my own practitioner background, I develop questions that aim to understand the field from the experience of its practitioners and not from established histories and archives.

My initial questions involved the investigation of the following: how Laban praxis travelled to Brazil and who the people involved with this discourse were; how this history evolved into the current scape<sup>5</sup> of Laban practices; and whether Brazilian practitioners make any contribution to the global field of Laban studies. These initial questions were modified to accommodate the experience retrieved from the field. As I engage and interact with the practitioners, and enhance my own abilities with Laban's movement principles, the questions acquire additional layers. Rather than departing from Brazil's local reality, I turn to look at the overall field to find its particularities materialised in Brazilian bodies and activities. With these additional layers the questions then become: how can I develop an understanding of the global field of Laban studies in order to access the work that is being

done in Brazil; can the transmission, dissemination and evolution of Laban praxis inform contemporary discourse; can Laban's epistemology inform the field today; has the work of the Brazilian practitioners maintained the memory of Laban's modernist thinking<sup>6</sup>; and finally, how can the mapping of the current scape of Laban-practices in Brazil inform the international scholarship of Laban studies?

These questions frame the basis of the speculative hypothesis of this research which suggests that Laban praxis is not a static set of systematic practices and/or theories but a praxis that evolves according to its time. From this standpoint, I argue that the contemporaneity of Laban praxis is materialised through the wide range of practices of active practitioners who carry Laban's name and movement principles. Yet the consolidation of this hypothesis depends on an understanding of the nature of Laban praxis. This means that in order to consider this hypothesis we must first understand what Laban praxis is.

### **3. The Nature of Laban Praxis as a Knowledge System**

An understanding of the epistemological character of Laban praxis is essential for the development of this thesis. Prior to this I need to locate my argument within my specific understanding of knowledge. Philosophical discussions on the character and nature of knowledge or Epistemology (Alcoff, 1998: viii) have been circulating since the emergence of Platonic philosophy in 400 B.C. (Risner, 2000: 156). Knowledge is, however, a result of lived circumstances. In this sense the philosopher David Pears (1972: 29) argues that in the development of human knowledge, practice proceeds intellectual understanding, which is developed only after an experience is codified and theorised. To encompass this thought, Pears (1972: 5) foresees three types of human knowledge - knowledge of facts, acquaintance, and know-how.

In the academic realm of the creative arts Robin Nelson (2006: 107) associates Pears's know-how to research practices that are based on the 'knowledge [of] how to do

things'. This know-how has been articulated by Michael Polanyi (1966) as 'tacit knowledge', denoting both culture-specific pre-reflexive behaviour and skills of bodily performances - such as dancing (Adloff, Gerund and Kaldewey, 2015).<sup>7</sup> Equally, the dance aesthetician and philosopher Anna Pakes (Pakes, 2003: 143) recognises that dance practice embodies different forms of knowledge. Or, as Baxmann suggests, 'dance belongs to an arsenal of movement training techniques that lie at the foundation of every cultural community as "tacit knowledge"' (Baxmann, 2009: 127).

Tacit know-how or 'bodily knowledge' (Hämäläinen, 2007) has been a topic of active debate in dance studies. Bodily knowledge, however, is a contemporary definition which combines a number of terms and which is intended to express the 'specific form of knowledge that is tied to movement' (*idem*: 57).<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, the dance scholar Soili Hämäläinen (2007: 56) suggests that this framework was introduced in dance practice by modernists artists such as Rudolf Laban<sup>9</sup>.

Like Hämäläinen, I believe that Laban's philosophy stands on similar tacit ground, as it originated from a practice and observation of human movement and involves the development of movement skills (see Laban, 1963, 1980; Newlove, 1993). In fact, I take this as the key to understanding the bodily knowledge system of Laban praxis and its further transmission to generations of practitioners. Laban's continuous enquiring led to the development of specific epistemological frameworks, transforming expressive movement into a comprehensible system. At the same time, Laban praxis feeds back to movement practice with new insights. Laban's epistemology could therefore be regarded as part of a 'practice turn' which is 'interested in understanding social and conceptual worlds by looking at [its] uses' (Collins, 2001: 115), offering a specific movement knowledge to its practitioners.

As movement knowledge, Laban praxis is learned/acquired in a process of familiarising and enhancing ourselves with our own motion capacities and somatic (or bodily) possibilities of expression. In this sense, the practice of Laban's movement principles is crucial, and it is important that it relates to a set of principles and not to external codified movement forms. To clarify, Colin Counsell (2006: 105) explains that 'the

forms and gestures characteristic of Rudolf Laban's practice, for example, were emphatically non-mimetic, not conducive to the representation of any recognisable historical reality'. This enables a subjectivation of the knowledge and a unique reproduction of it by anyone who encounters this knowledge through their own movement capacities and training background. When a person kinaesthetically learns a movement principle, they create a cognitive understanding of its execution as well as a kinaesthetic knowledge of how this principle feels in the body-in-motion (Noland, 2009: 47–8).<sup>10</sup> The ability to use 360 degrees kinespheric space (space surrounding the body) or working through the nuances of the different Effort qualities (time, space, weight and flow), or a mastery of movement, are some examples of Laban's framework which would allow such an approach.

Interestingly, not many Laban practitioners have recognised their acquisition of a mastery of movement as the development of tacit knowledge. However, it has been noted by Carol-Lynne Moore and Kaoru Yamamoto (2012) and Aaron Levinsohn and Thecla Schiphorst (2013). I believe that it is not a lack of awareness on the part of the community of artists but a lack of theorisation of what exactly configures Laban praxis. In fact, during the conversations I had with the practitioners cited throughout this thesis, there seemed to be a common sense of the need to exercise Laban's movement principles in order for one to master individual movement. Indeed, this understanding is extremely helpful in discussing the contemporary practices and dissemination of Laban praxis alongside the development of related scholarly research.

The difference that exists between Laban praxis and other dance forms has been substantial for this project. This is because in my research the transmission of Laban praxis in and to Brazil is associated with a 'technique of the body' (Mauss, 1973) rather than a dance form<sup>11</sup>, such as western and eastern modern and classical dance styles. The anthropologist Marcel Mauss developed a perspective of how a body, through physical training, acquires a practical skill or a habitus (Mauss, 1973: 73). Mauss, however, believes that 'every technique properly so-called has its own form' (*idem*). In the case of Laban praxis, however, I would argue that there is in fact a lack of a specific



movement design: Laban practice does not have a given form or fixed aesthetics. Rather it proposes a skill, a mind-body knowledge of movement principles (i.e. of use of space and dynamic qualities of rhythm, speed, force, direction and flow). In this sense the mover is able to embody whatever combination of spatial and dynamic qualities to express her or himself. Laban's student Mary Wigman recalls that Laban 'never tried to hold on' and 'give any artistic form' (Wigman, 1975: 34) to his praxis. Thus, despite the disparity between the composition of 'forms' in Laban praxis and Mauss's concept, the use of techniques of the body to refer to the tacit skill that the practitioners acquire when training in Laban's movement principles as well as analysing the movement of the other remains relevant.

Following these lines, throughout this thesis I demonstrate that, as a system for developing kinaesthetic knowledge, Laban praxis is reshaped by each individual who learns it, depending on their individual characteristics and aspirations. This acquired knowledge becomes a mnemonic reserve (Roach, 1996) which is further transmitted to other practitioners through studio-based exercises (based on improvisation, 'movement scales' and choreographic practice), followed by a certain conceptual understanding. I have myself experienced this way of learning and practicing Laban's Art of Movement through different strands of practice since 2002. From my participation in workshops to my archival research of oral testimonies of former and contemporary Laban practitioners, studio practice recurs in the transmission of Laban praxis. Hence, this pattern of knowledge transmission has been named by the performance studies scholar Diana Taylor (2003) as 'repertoire'.

#### **4. Repertoire Transmission**

The fact that Laban praxis does not present an aesthetic form (or style) that characterises performance productions and transmission heritage means that it cannot be compared with, arguably similar in other respects, studies in the migration (or

diasporas) of dance practices, which look at how dance forms travel across different cultures (see David, 2012; Hahn, 2007; Purkayastha, 2014; Srinivasan, 2012)<sup>12</sup>. Indeed, an important part of my research involves understanding the migratory dynamics of Laban's discourse, while I investigate how Laban praxis is adapted and transformed in the bodies of different cultures and specifically in Brazil. However, I would like to propose that when thinking of the movement of Laban praxis through bodies, cultures, time and space, the tacit knowledge or know-how in this case could be described more accurately through Taylor's concept of the repertoire (2003). As she suggests: '[e]mbodied practice, along with and bound up with other cultural practices, offers a way of knowing' (Taylor, 2003: 3).

Taylor differentiates the bodily knowledge (repertoire) from objectified memory (archive) transferred through generations of practitioners. While the archive consists of memory stored in enduring materials such as texts, documents buildings, and bones which are resistant to change, the repertoire is constituted by the ephemeral practices/knowledge such as spoken language, dance, sports and ritual (Taylor, 2003: 19–20). Repertoire 'enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance singing – in short all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge' allowing 'scholars to trace traditions and influences'. This suggests that repertoire carries the memory of people and their practices (*idem*: 20). Most importantly, Taylor enunciates that both archive and repertoire are conveyors of memory. When associating this theory with Laban praxis, archive memory resides in books, papers, programme notes, and video documentation on Laban, whereas repertoire is developed in the acquisition of bodily knowledge or when Laban's movement principles are learned through their physical training.

When considering the epistemology of Laban praxis as a bodily knowledge, I propose that Laban's archive does not replace its performed utterance, meaning that the knowledge and memory carried by the practitioners are unique and not comparable with the information objectified in books. Taylor (2003: 17) explains that certain embodied practices communicate or transmit more than essential facts and codices present in the

archive. From this perspective I turn my enquiry to investigate the repertoire transmission based on actions, movement, daily practices, teaching, and activities in general that convey Laban praxis from one body to another. This means that I am contrasting repertoire (or bodily know-how) with knowledge transferred through Laban's books/archive. This decentring of the historic role of the archive allows me to consider how the dislocation of artists and their inter-actions led to the transferring of movement skills that were further developed according to these artists' individual backgrounds. It further grants the possibility of considering the work that is produced out of this transmission of praxis, such as artistic activity that is not labelled under Laban's name. This perspective also validates the heritage that reached Brazil, bringing Laban praxis from Wigman and Jooss's choreographic practices, for example.

Therefore, the notion of repertoire offers an opportunity to trace traditions and influences, that leave their mark as they move (Taylor, 2003: 26). And, as Taylor points out, the shift towards using the repertoire as material (data) for research entails a rethinking of analytical methods (*idem*: 33). The shift of the focus to materials that are alive, demands the development of new strategies to grasp them. To capture the locomotion of Laban praxis repertoire I use oral memory, ethnography and reflexive practice methods, where the repertoire constitutes the main source and the archive provides supporting information.

## **5. Questions of Method**

My experience of the field of Laban studies through practice is a central concern and has been a means to gather data for my research. This interest also informs my approach towards my findings and the writing of this thesis. To address this reflexivity I draw on embodied ethnography methods (Bacon, 2006; Ness, 1996a; Sklar, 2000) and consider my experiences as data of the field investigated. This reflexivity, however, is also notable in Laban studies. Preston-Dunlop (1998b), Dörr (2008), Maletic (1987) and

Bradley (2009) describe how Laban's conceptual framework emerged from a combination of his observation and studio practices with a diversity of interdisciplinary theories and philosophies. So, my efforts to embody Laban praxis alongside my research correspond to an analogous epistemology to Laban's.

Practically, to understand the particularities of Laban studies and how it evolved through time and space (communities, countries, continents), I investigate the essential characteristics that compose the field, both nationally in Brazil as well as internationally. My interest is not in developing historical accounts of the field, but in understanding its contemporary frame and how practitioners articulate Laban praxis in their individual activities. I therefore began with an oral history project that maps and collects testimonies from a wide spectrum of artists in Brazil. Then, through an ethnographic approach, I participated in Laban-related events, workshops and courses where, in addition to the description of the routines observed, I, as a member of the community, experienced the field's overall character and politics. Still with an ethnographic approach, I developed three case studies where I investigate and experience the lives and work of three prominent Brazilian Laban-practitioners in order to understand the possible contribution of local frameworks to the global field. Given my project's historical and ethnographical nature, my southern hemispheric outsider-insider practitioner perspective is revealed across the chapters as I develop a critique of the field.

To develop and analyse the data collected I use grounded research analysis, allowing the field to reveal its intrinsic dynamics to me. Most importantly, my attitude is that of a practitioner-researcher where I take into account the dynamics and movement of my research endeavour. This qualitative character informed me about the field's (and my own research) particulars. In this way, practice-as-research methods were also considered as a research framework, even though I have chosen not to share and disseminate my findings through practice, but through writing.

It becomes clear that my research is not about the past (history) but rests in the contemporaneity of Laban praxis that sits outside the (dominant) English-speaking field. This particular focus shapes this thesis as a history of the present. In this sense I bring

forth Michel Foucault's philosophy, which offers valuable insights to my enquiry. For Foucault, a history of the present seeks to identify present-day practices that are taken for granted and at the same time remain under analysed (Garland, 2014: 373). I have therefore adopted Foucault's genealogical perspective which offers an appropriate ground for my investigation:

Genealogy is motivated not by a historical concern to understand the past – though any historical claims it makes must be valid, verifiable ones – but instead by a critical concern to understand the present. It aims to trace the forces that gave birth to our present-day practices and to identify the historical conditions upon which they still depend. Its point is not to think historically about the past but rather to use historical materials to rethink the present. (Garland, 2014: 373)

Foucault's genealogy clarifies my own research intent of departing from a critical concern to use the past so as to inform and investigate the present practices of Laban's discourse in Brazil. In addition to illuminating the investigation of the history of the present, genealogy also provides me with critical stance over the field, which I make evident in my discussions across the chapters.

## **6. Structure of the Thesis**

To build an understanding of the field of Laban studies and its particulars in Brazil, I depart from the general field towards a specific context in space and time. This choice allows the reader to develop an overall understanding of the history, scholarship and unfolding of Laban's discourse in order to then grasp its local and cultural specificity in Brazil. In the first chapter I introduce Rudolf Laban and the field of Laban practices. Here, I present the Laban heritage, the different strands of practice related to Laban's discourse and the vast scholarship of the field. I justify my use of the terms *Laban praxis* and *Laban*

*discourse* and also raise issues regarding Laban's persona or multiple personalities. These distinctions set my particular perspective over the field – Laban's practices and theories – and which I use to develop the thesis arguments. To situate the scholarship that somewhat involves Laban praxis, I apply source criticism, dividing the sources into primary and secondary, and indicating their nature such as biographies or descriptions of Laban's discourse. In addition I highlight the conflict among sources, which gives access to debates on the evolution of Laban's discourse.

The second chapter introduces the methodology of the research. It scrutinises the methods of oral history and ethnography, giving particular emphasis to the activities developed in each of these qualitative research frameworks. By situating my work within the literature in the field I validate my processes of gathering and analysing data. Alongside the qualitative research methods I also discuss my association with Foucault's history genealogy, where I explain how Foucault's critique illuminates the enquiries raised throughout the thesis.

In the third chapter I establish the specificity of my field of analysis: practices of Laban's discourse in Brazil. Throughout the chapter I develop a chronological history of how Laban praxis travelled to Brazil, revealing the pioneer-practitioners who contributed to consolidating modern dance activities in the country. To illustrate my findings, I provide details of my oral history project with the Brazilian Laban-practitioners and demonstrate how their experiential narratives reveal both similar and contrasting opinions of Laban's praxis and heritage in the local sphere.

In the fourth chapter I return to detail the different heritages or strands of Laban praxis recognised in the first chapter. This serves not only to frame a discussion of transmission and genealogies of Laban practices, but also to set an overall picture of the historical and artistic range of Laban's discourse. The understanding of how Laban praxis was passed on from one practitioner to the other and was materialised in the practices of artists, pedagogues and researchers proves essential to develop an understanding of the contemporaneity or embodied existence of Laban's discourse. To develop this analysis I draw on Performance Studies theories from Diana Taylor and Joseph Roach to consider

how the memory of Laban praxis exists in different strands of practice of his discourse. The use of this framework illuminates the landscape of Laban praxis in Brazil, or how Laban's philosophy is materialised in the work of local practitioners.

In order to give specific examples and detail the histories provided in the third chapter and the practices considered in the fourth chapter, the fifth chapter narrows the focus to introduce the lives of three Brazilian practitioners - Ciane Fernandes, Lenira Rengel and Regina Miranda - who established substantial archive and repertoire of Laban praxis in the country. I chose these practitioners because of the range and relevance of their personal research and work. In this chapter I provide details of their training background and how they came to encounter Laban praxis.

Throughout the sixth chapter I pick up on the heritages of Laban praxis to frame and discuss the particular work of the three Brazilian practitioners who structured their activities following specific strands of Laban praxis. To further discuss their individual praxis and their association with Laban's discourse I develop an in-depth discussion of the activities they evidence. Also, I explain their main achievements related to the field of Laban studies and reveal details of the range of disciplines they merge in their work.

Fernandes's work configures a combination of different strands of Laban praxis to develop art, research and pedagogy. With a dance theatre premise she takes Authentic Movement (AM) as the spine of her creative practices, which supports the somatic section of her performative research. The Somatic Performative Research has become the axis of her current work, which includes artistic, therapeutic, pedagogy and even inclusive practices, all part of her academic and artistic research activities.

On the other hand, Rengel has associated the non-dualistic premise of Laban's praxis to cognitive science scholarship. Her unique combination of Laban's discourse and semiotics brought a fresh approach to Laban's drive for movement as communication. Rengel's life-long pedagogical practice contributes to introducing Laban praxis to a large number of dance and school teachers around the country.

Miranda offers an extensive career as a performing arts practitioner who developed her artistic work alongside her dance company *AtoresBailarinos* in Rio de Janeiro. Her artistic and entrepreneurial activities influenced the development of her work, linking Laban praxis with psychoanalysis, mathematics and social science.

Finally, in the seventh chapter I explore the discourse of the above practitioners in relation to the cultural studies scholar Raymond Williams's (1977) cultural framework of dominant, residual and emerging practices. To understand the nature of each individual contribution I consider the work of the three practitioners in relation to the Brazilian model of cultural appropriation, anthropophagy. This term has been used by a variety of disciplines as a metaphor to understand Brazilian cultural (and post-colonial) processes, at times even acting as the local post-colonial theory itself (Islam, 2012).

To conclude I revise the arguments developed in each chapter in light of issues that I raise on authorship, as discussed by Foucault (1998) and Barthes (1977). In particular, I demonstrate how in order to research Laban praxis it is necessary to 'practice the research' embodying Laban praxis in different ways. Finally, I suggest an understanding of Laban praxis in relation to its contemporary times, providing an overview of what I believe could constitute the materialisation of Laban praxis nowadays.

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#### Notes to Introduction:

<sup>1</sup> Laban studies is a term that is widely disseminated to relate to the wide field that involves Laban praxis. From a 2015 call for papers of the Journal of Movement Arts Literacy to the descriptions of courses on Laban praxis offered by renowned institutions such as: the Trinity Laban in London (see <http://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/schools-and-community/professional-development/dance-professionals/specialist-diploma-choreologica-0> access in 20/06/2015); in the LMA diploma that describes the diploma as a 'certification in Laban studies' (see <https://labanbc.wordpress.com/category/labانبartenieff-and-somatic-studies-canada-lssc/> access in 20/06/2015); in the description of courses offered by the Laban Guild (see <http://www.labanguild.org.uk/courses/> access in 20/06/2015); in the scholarship of Laban related scholars such as (Bell-Kanner, 1998: 201; Hwang, 2013: 3; Killingbeck, 2010: 118)

<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to count the number of people who cite Laban as part of their working framework. During my quest I was also pointed to people's friends, acquaintances and past teachers who had mentioned Laban's name as a working principle. For this reason I had to develop a selection of interview participants for data collection. These choices are further discussed in Chapter 3.



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<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed account of my personal experience and background please refer to Appendix 3.

<sup>4</sup> This first research stage resulted in the publication of an article (Scialom, 2014) and a book chapter (Scialom, 2015)

<sup>5</sup> I use the word *scape* following Arjun Appadurai's (1996) employment of the term, which is related to landscapes that are configured by a fluid and constantly shifting exchange of information and ideas in a global settings.

<sup>6</sup> Laban has been identified as part of the canon of modern dance by most historians of his heritage (Bradley, 2009; Dörr, 2008; Launay, 1996; Maletic, 1987; Partsch-Bergsohn, 2003; Preston-Dunlop and Curtis-Jones, 2013a; Preston-Dunlop and Purkis, 1989) who demonstrate links of his work to modern literary, music and visual arts developments. For example, Launay (1996) delivers an entire monograph to discuss Laban's modernist character. Maletic (1987) surveys how Laban was influenced by philosophical, artistic and movement studies paradigms of his time. She describes how Laban's praxis was aligned with other artists and physical educators who were exploring movement initiation from the centre of gravity; use of tension and relaxation (release) as rhythmic components and connection of inner emotions (or intentions) with outer movement (or expression) (*idem*: 165-6). Maletic also expands the links between Laban's works and the psychoanalyst Gustav Jung. On the other hand Preston-Dunlop (1989) thoroughly links Laban's modernist agenda to the work and abstract art of the visual artist Wassily Kandinsky and the musician Arnold Schoenberg harmonic innovations as well as Wagner's concept of total art or *Gesamtkunstwerk*. On different grounds Jones (2013) discusses modernist influences across dance and literature giving examples of how Laban was aligned with the literary work of Nietzsche and Ezra Pound.

<sup>7</sup> One of the clearest examples of tacit knowledge given by Polanyi was of bike-riding, where a person learns how to do it (its practice) but cannot quite explain in words what she or he does (Collins, 2001: 116).

<sup>8</sup> I am aware that all dance forms develop and require tacit knowledge in order to be mastered and performed under the style's aesthetic demands. However, they involve the acquisition of a specific form of knowledge, whereas Laban praxis is related to general expressive knowledge.

<sup>9</sup> Hämmäläinen (2007: 56) explains that a number of dance and movement therapies emerged from the work of dance artists such as Laban, Wigman, Humphrey and Duncan.

<sup>10</sup> Noland (2009) brings an in-depth discussion of the ways a kinaesthetic knowledge is acquired and further developed by an individual.

<sup>11</sup> The understanding of Laban praxis as a technique of the body and not a codified form could be questioned by the reader who perceives Labanotation/Kinetography Laban or Laban's movement scales as fixed forms. In relation to Laban's movement scales (or Space Harmony) there are points in space which are determined and which should be reached by the dancer, but the embodiment of the scale or the ways in which these points are accessed depends on each dancer. Preston-Dunlop (1984b: 2) explains that, when exercising Laban's movement scales, the dancer chooses how he or she will reach and access a specific point in space. In regards to the notation, despite including closed symbols to express movement, the score developed becomes the result of the notator who observes the movement. the same is applied to the interpretation of a score, as Laban himself explained that neither the symbol or the movement are representations of thoughts, but actualisations or 'realisation of a process of tension' (Laban in McCaw, 2011: 14). These elements suggest that Laban practice is directly dependent on the subjectivity - interpretation and execution - of the dancer.

<sup>12</sup> Tomie Hahn (2007) looks at the case of teaching and transmitting tradition in Japanese dance; Priya Srinivasam (2011) considers the transnational movement and kinaesthetic legacy of Indian classical dance forms; Ann David (2012) demonstrates how the immigration of Tamil people from Sri Lanka to England also brought an 'embodied migration' of Bharatanatyam dance; and Prarthana Purkayastha (2014) contemplates the transnational encounters related to Indian modern dance and how they influenced the choreographic practice of a selection of local choreographers.

## **Chapter One: The Laban Heritage**

### **1. Introducing Rudolf Laban**

Rudolf Laban is a well-known and somewhat controversial figure who was vigorously engaged in the performing arts field during the first half of the twentieth century. Throughout his career in movement studies he revealed himself as a unique character. His remarkable work includes the following: his influence on the emergence and development of European modern dance at the turn of the twentieth century; the introduction of a system of movement notation; and a framework for movement training and analysis. During a fifty-year career investigating the particulars and the art of (human) movement, Laban devised a large number of practices and corresponding theories that are still of strong interest to a vast range of practitioners. In addition Laban's framework continues to be thoroughly used and explored, even more than half a century after his death.

With this rich heritage in mind, this chapter introduces the artist-researcher Rudolf Laban and his heritage, examining the scholarship that relates to his praxis. The intention is not to detail the extensive nature of Laban's discourse nor to provide a historical analysis of his life (as this has already been done by the scholars discussed in this chapter), but to offer an overview of the scope of his discourse, highlighting the politics that emerge in the existing scholarship of his praxis. In this sense, the revision and discussion of the scholarship that has emerged from and alongside Laban's praxis allows a careful articulation of its current affairs.

It is difficult to summarise the life and work of a person whose career in movement studies spanned over fifty years and several different countries and whose work continues to expand. Each of the existing historical perspectives of Laban's life and work provides both a subjective and objective contribution to the scholarship, exposing, at first instance,

each author's experience with Laban's praxis. Within this scenario, Susanne Franco (2007: 92) holds that when discussing Laban's heritage, experience becomes an important part of the construction of its history. Hence, Franco asserts that when experiences are brought into historiography they should be analysed rather than judged. In this sense Franco insists that it is important to acknowledge different perspectives and experiences to understand how the heritage and tradition of Laban practice is maintained and propelled (*idem*: 94). Taking Laban praxis primarily as the blending of the experience of moving bodies with a set of theories that develop a cognitive understanding of embodiment, I follow the 'roads along which the threads of history and memory intertwine to weave the fabric of the investigation and representation of the past' (*idem*: 93). It is alongside Franco's perspective that I venture to review Laban's main life deeds and scholarship in order to offer an understanding of his work and the experiences that configure its memory in past and present scholarship.

## **2. The Artist-Researcher**

Rudolf Laban was an artist, dancer, philosopher and theoretician who lived and worked in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century. Rudolf Jean-Baptist Attila Laban de Varalja was born in Bratislava (Austro-Hungarian Empire) in 1879 and died in England in 1958. In his 79 years of dynamic, unstable and nomadic life, Laban produced an enormous amount of knowledge expressed in movement practice, writings and iconography. His pupils Valerie Preston-Dunlop and John Hodgson (1990: 7) believe that he is arguably 'the most influential figure in the 20<sup>th</sup> century', a multifaceted character whose work and influence can be traced in many different fields.

The evolution of Laban's practice and thinking followed his constant displacement (around Eastern and Western Europe, with a visit to the United States), as well as his modernist cultural, religious and scientific investigations. Unveiling and expressing different mystical and political orientations such as the Rosicrucian and Freemasonry

(Dörr, 2008; Green, 1986; Kant, 2002; Preston-Dunlop, 1998b) and Nazi (Kant, 2004a; Kew, 1999), Laban was a person in line with his time and political surroundings or possibly even thinking beyond it, as Preston-Dunlop (1998) suggests. In perceiving his accomplishments to be ahead of his time, his followers consider him as a 'true visionary' (Bradley, 2009: 1; Brooks, 1993: 30; Preston-Dunlop, 1998b; Davies, 2001: 16).

Born into a prestigious Hungarian family, Laban lived his childhood and adolescence in Eastern Europe, experiencing diverse physical activities such as sports, horse riding and fencing, as well as graphic and theatrical arts (Maletic, 1987: 4). He began his professional career in the arts during his early twenties, after abandoning a military cadet position in the Austro-Hungarian army and enrolling in the *Écoles de Beaux Arts* in Paris (Preston-Dunlop, 1998b: 9). His settling in Paris was a landmark in his life, imprinting a shift towards an artistic pathway.

After an initial period working as a visual artist (roughly from 1900 to 1913) Laban refined his interest in the expression of the human body. According to (McCaw, 2011: 9) Laban committed himself to establish dance (expressive movement) as an art form and the dancer as an artist. However, Marion Kant (2002) challenges this notion, insisting that Laban's main project was not to establish an art form but a religious one, nonetheless intimately connected to dance practice. Whichever perspective one takes, to understand Laban's life ambition, his enterprise should be seen as a whole - from the very beginning of his career in the early 1910's to his death in the late 1950's (*idem*: 44). In this sense, both of these perspectives indicate Laban's drive to achieve a goal related to human expression.

Having been considered a 'conceptual pioneer' of the twentieth century, whose ideas had a 'profound influence on the German dance tradition' (Walther, 1994: 27), Laban developed his praxis based on the premise that each individual (whether professional artist or amateur) should discover and master their own capacities of movement expression. According to Dörr (2008: 22) Laban's premises would lead the individual to develop a bodily consciousness that acted towards the proficiency of movement and individual expression. This personal development was available not only for professionals

(dancers) but for amateurs as well (people interested in accessing the expressive possibilities of solo and group movement). These principles permeated Laban's praxis until the end of his life and career (Maletic, 1987).

Despite the clear focus towards the provision of expressive movement, Laban's personality, lifestyle and work have generated a set of controversies. For example, Laban's relationships with women have been a key area of debate. Most of the shorter biographical studies avoid or simply rush over the topic. Preston-Dunlop (1998b) and Dörr (2008) go into further detail, however, offering diverse perspectives or interpretations of Laban's sexual life. While Dörr (2008:26) sees Laban as a 'jealous dictator', Preston-Dunlop (1998:39) pictures Laban as an advocate of free love. Nonetheless, Warren Lamb attempts to explain that the attraction that women may have felt for Laban was related to his ability to 'understand people almost at a first glance' (Lamb in McCaw, 2006: 28). Lamb notes that the women felt that Laban could 'penetrate into their innermost being' (*idem*) where he would demonstrate an understanding of them that no one else would have had before. On the other hand, Kant (2002) associates Laban's charisma with religious lodge dynamics. Whatever the source of Laban's charisma and ability to connect with individuals, these characteristics must have bewildered many of his students who, one way or another, remained loyal to their master.

Other sites of debate concern Laban's relation to mysticism and ritualistic cults, believed by some to be his main purpose in life (Kant, 2002). One of the most frequently disclosed arguments among his pupils erupted through a written debate triggered by the former president of the Laban Guild, Gordon Curl. Through a reading of Laban's German publications, Curl understood that Laban's Art of Movement has a 'rightful place in the harmony of the world' (Curl, 1967a: 15). Indeed Curl accepts that the mainspring of Laban's praxis presents a 'complete and utter devotion to the combined forces and was manifested in the entire universe' (*idem*: 16). In addition Curl stresses that the centre of Laban's 'philosophy' is rooted in the belief of the 'divine power of the dance' (1967b :26). On the other hand Roderick Lange challenges Curl's perspective emphasising that in order to read Laban's theories it is necessary to 'translate' Laban's early 'metaphoric

German' (Lange, 1969: 9). For Lange, Laban's particular use of language triggered a set of misunderstandings of his theories, such as the ones presented by Curl. Lange attempts to dissolve Laban's mystical image, claiming that Laban developed his German artistic 'manifestos' to reinforce his 'amazingly objective exposition of the principles of movement and dance' (1969:10). Lange insists that we should consider Laban's theories in their entire scope rather than looking at a specific portion of his work as a representation of its entirety. With an explicit critique Preston-Dunlop feels that Curl's articles were an 'irresponsible thing' based on 'erroneous assumptions' (Preston-Dunlop, 1984a). In between these positions Lamb acknowledges Laban's mystical tendencies. In particular he remembers Laban's regular use of the word 'cosmos' having space harmony (or Choreutics) as a physical approach to cosmological thinking (Lamb in McCaw, 2006: 29).

Laban's political moves were another source of controversy. Laban lived through the consequences and reverberations of two world wars, which scarred his career and history, leading him to migrate to different countries throughout his life. During the First World War Laban deserted the Hungarian army (Kant, 2002: 50) or otherwise escaped its recruitment due to severe illness (Preston-Dunlop, 1998: 38). His political involvements, however, did not stay concealed for long. One of the most obvious debates rests in his association with the Nazi regime in the 1930's. In this sense, Laban's contribution to racial discrimination (anti-Semitism) cannot be excluded from his endeavours. Preston-Dunlop (1998b) protects his image claiming he was raised in an environment afflicted with racial discrimination. Hodgson (2001: 131) contends that Laban was 'politically naive' when collaborating with the Nazi in the 1930's. On similar lines Maletic agrees that Laban was 'lured into the framework of Nazi spectacles' (1987: 123). Partsch-Bergson (1994: 91), on the other hand, ignores Laban's involvement with the Nazi party, reasoning solely that Laban 'failed to notice the ideological goals of the regime', having mistakenly adhered to its politics to fulfil his artistic and professional aspirations. Differently, McCaw (2011: 346-347) suggests surveying the memory of Laban's collaborators. For example McCaw introduces the perspective of Laban's Jewish collaborator Felicia Sachs who demonstrated an understanding and declared she would not blame Laban of his racist acts.

The perspectives of Laban's students, pupils or supporters (such as Hodgson, 2001; Preston-Dunlop, 1998b; Maletic, 1987; Partsch-Bergsohn, 2003; McCaw, 2011) contrast with the investigation of a new generation of scholars who were not personally acquainted with Laban. Vertinsky (2009: 40) believes that Laban's biographers have constructed a 'sympathetic portrait' which overlooks Laban's involvement with fascist activities. The biographer-practitioners have somewhat softened their discourse to avoid revealing the atrocities that Laban produced during his collaboration with the Nazis. Hence, research done in the last twenty years has begun to expose Laban's Nazi character, whilst also reinforcing the importance of Laban's body of knowledge.

Patricia Vertinsky (2005, 2009) and Carole Kew (1999), for example, examine the body culture (*korperkultur*) and fascist influences which Laban disclosed during his period in Germany (roughly from 1910 to 1937). Both authors reveal how the local politics influenced Laban's work and development of praxis as Laban and Wigman's *Ausdruckstanz* 'embodied a cluster of ideologies that had dominated Germany in the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the notion of art as the handmaiden of politics' (Vertinsky, 2005: 275). Vertinsky illustrates how Laban was a 'willing participant' (*idem*: 40) in the Nazis' social construction through his community dance ensembles and festival gatherings. She claims that the regime made use of Laban's working tools as mechanisms of social control, transforming them into a fascist instrument and adding them to the toolbox of National Socialism.

Full monographs were dedicated to look at the period where Laban was involved with the Nazis. With an overview of dance in Germany prior to the Second World War Kate Elswit (2014) has given valuable contribution, exposing the presence of Nazi influences in the production of German artists, including Laban. In fact, Karina and Kant (2004) challenged Laban's innocence dedicating an entire monograph to present and discuss historical and archival evidence to support the shaping of Laban's Nazi persona. These works suggest that critical examination of the archive can broaden the debate over Laban's life.

Despite the arguments developed among the biographical accounts that either include or exclude the political in Laban's life, more than fifty years after his death, his persona and discourse are ever more investigated. When addressing the political in Laban's historiography, Susanne Franco (Franco, 2007: 92) admits that historical research reveals the importance of the subjective contributions that each author brings to the picture. This understanding enables multiple configurations of the subject explored - Rudolf Laban. It is with this perspective that I set out to look at the ways in which Laban himself and the scholars/biographers of his endeavours interpret facts, documents and experiences thus shaping diverse images of Laban's persona.

### **3. The Persona**

As I flagged above, one of the recurring issues in sources related to Rudolf Laban is his multiplicity of characters. The composition of Laban's persona is surrounded by a strong debate that combines 'the man' (Hodgson and Preston-Dunlop, 1990; Preston-Dunlop, 2013b) and his 'legacy' (Davies, 2001; Lepczyk, 2009; Reisel, 2008). I use the term persona to refer to the assortments of portraits that Laban embodied throughout his life or which were assigned to him in each biography. Here I elucidate the term from its theatrical connotation. The theatre scholar Patrice Pavis clarifies that the persona stands as 'the mask to the character': the actor who metaphorically wears the mask, presents a clear detachment from its character, assuming a role of an executor (1998: 47). Each point of view shaped over Laban's life and work develops a kind of mask that portrays his character to the world.

The literature on Laban praxis offers an assortment of portraits of Rudolf Laban. They depict Laban as a theoretician (McCaw, 2011), a philosopher (Curl, 1967a), a 'man of theatre' (Dörr, 2003, 2004; Preston-Dunlop, 2013b), a guru and a trickster (Hodgson, 2001), a scientist (Lange, 1969), a pedagogue (North, 1990a; Preston-Dunlop, 1963) a Nazi (Guilbert, 2012; Karina and Kant, 2004), and even as a 'chameleon-like' man



(Hodgson, 2001; Moore, 2009). To develop each of these characters from Laban's personality and theories, the writers address specific strands of Laban's praxis. The perspective of each writer is revealed in such a way that if Laban is being examined from the aspect of his choreographies, he would be called a choreographer or dancer. If the perspective shifts to Laban's relationship to National Socialism, he can then be labelled as a Nazi. From the perspective of his modern educational dance, Laban becomes a pedagogue. While looking at his principles of movement, he can be seen as either a theoretician or a scientist. In addition, if Laban is seen from the lens of his drawings of geometrical shapes, he could be taken as a mathematician or architect. Laban's belief in the expressive capacity of human movement turns him into a philosopher and his association to cults, freemasonry and Rosicrucianism reveals his mystical character.

It would be inconsistent to deny the presence of any of these characters, as Laban actually engaged in each and every one of these activities. It is equally wrong, however, to limit him to a single portrait. These portraits could be compared to masks that Laban fitted according to the situation he was facing, representing the 'various states of men' (Marshall in Napier, 1986: 8), and displaying one portrait or facet from an assortment of possibilities. From my analysis of the scholarship I believe that every mask depicted represents a true persona of Laban. Therefore, considering Laban as an association of different personas offers the possibility of admitting the multiplicity of characters as personifications of who/what Laban might have been.

It is noticeable that each of Laban's biographies depicts one or more of his personas. In dance historiography Lena Hammergren (1995: 191) speaks not only of the multiplicity of personas of the subject of research, but of the researcher's own plural analytic personas which allows him or her to:

get a different sense of context-oriented studies, where it becomes not only a question of which context we chose to examine but also of how we change together with the context.

This means that it is relevant to consider not only Laban's personas but also the character or context embedded in the analytical stance of the biographer, historian or scholar that represents Laban's discourse.

The interpretations and composition of personas developed from the debates over Laban's involvement in a variety of activities (as mentioned above) demonstrate the complex hermeneutics of looking at Laban's work. Added to the multiplicity of personas depicted, there are also Laban's own character enactments. Laban's persona is not only composed of the association and at times conflicting views of him, but also of his own personifications of diverse characters. Laban seemed to be constantly crafting himself characters, which can be verified in the diversity of his portraits, writings and autobiography. For example, while analysing the different portraits and photographs of Laban during his life Hodgson (2001:16) offers the following interpretation:

In one portrait he is an army officer cadet, in another he looks like a Bohemian poet. In one he looks more of a mystic, another presents him as a debonair young man, while a further photograph shows him rather like a business executive.

Moore (2009: 2) feels that it is most likely that the on-going changes in Laban's professional interests and life cycles were the main factors responsible for his development of different characters. Moore reasons that this diversity added layers of complexity to his life, which I observe, adds an even deeper entanglement between actor, characters and its masks. From a psychoanalytical perspective, Carl Jung (1953) explains that the mask feigns individuality, making others, as well as the mask wearer, believe in its representation. However, the one who wears the mask is simply playing a role in which the collective psyche is present and speaks out. We do not know to what extent Laban was aware of his characters and if he consciously or unconsciously chose the masks he was wearing. He might have even confused himself with his own characters. In fact, his autobiography (Laban, 1975) provides examples of his self-characterisation and role playing, which justifies Hodgson's characterisation of Laban's autobiography as a 'testimonial-cum-dance-drama' (2001: 129).

Not only has Laban's personality been the target of multiple interpretations, but so has his work. Karen Bradley (2009) asserts that each biographer had a particular interest in Laban's work and created a character through their personal perspective of praxis they were involved with. Bradley attempts to translate these interpretations, suggesting that each author directs the focus of their narratives towards certain pathways, distancing or approaching Laban from and to the field of dance. In this sense Bradley suggests that Laban's persona and his work have fostered a *Rashomon syndrome*<sup>1</sup> (Bradley, 2002: 109) where different perspectives compose a ambiguous truth of a determined happening. She observes the development of diverse potential truths to what exactly was and is 'Laban's Legacy'. According to Bradley, '...we will not find a definitive picture of Laban, but rather only a spectrum of perspectives and disagreements' (*idem*).

On the other hand Preston-Dunlop (1980a: 41) believes that Laban's persona should be considered from the work he developed and not his personal statements:

...one can discern more about Laban's views from what he did than from what he said or wrote, for his writing is not in his native language, is poetic, and readily changes from fact to fantasy to belief, laced with the German habit of building multisyllabic words.

My disclosure of Laban's multiple personas, crafted from either the interpretation of his work or by Laban himself, intends to acknowledge the plurality of Laban's character which is built around his enactments, his praxis and the unique experience each pupil had alongside him. This perspective fosters the understanding of Laban as a persona rather than as 'the man'. This is because it admits plurality and difference rather than reducing (or over-empowering) him to a single character. It also promotes a democratic and inclusive investigation of the set of biographical accounts that consider Laban's life and work endeavours, instead of eliminating the sources that may be debated as flawed. It is with this plural perspective that I now move to look at the source materials of his life and praxis, allowing a wider and inclusive discussion of the dissemination and developments of Laban's discourse.

#### **4. Publications and Source Materials of Laban Praxis**

Having outlined the extensive nature of Laban's career and some of the troubled debates that involve the history of his discourse I now turn to scrutinise the scholarship that archives this memory. To survey the sources (that debate Laban's discourse and his personality) I applied source criticism (analysis and classification of sources such as primary – personal experience - and secondary – second hand/ historiographic account) to classify the scholarship available in relation to the field of Laban studies. Rahikainen and Fellman (2012) report that despite recent debate over the use of this method, it is still defended by history scholars as a valid classification of sources.

Considering the broad range of scholars who have written about Laban, I approached the publications available by appraising the 'curation'<sup>2</sup> and 'interpretation' of archival documents (Hammergren, 2004: 22) of the authors who devised biographic material of Laban. In addition I also acknowledged the subjectivity of each author (as suggested by Franco, 2007: 92) or their relationship and connection to Laban. My survey was predominantly undertaken on the sources published in English. This means that the references presented in no way exhaust the full range of materials that include biographical references to Laban. However, I agree that the ones I acknowledge here have served as the basis of most of the international scholarship emerging in the area.

##### **4.1 Primary Sources**

In regards to the primary archival data, there is a great volume of information that can be retrieved from Laban's life and work. Most of the material is found in German, English and French (languages spoken by Laban and his collaborators). There is also an

enormous amount of archival information scattered throughout the countries that Laban inhabited.

Starting with Laban's own published writings I differentiate his theoretical treatises from his auto-biographical publication. Laban published a single autobiography halfway through his career (at the age of 56) in 1935 when his popularity in Germany was in decline (Preston-Dunlop, 1998b: 280). The book was translated by Laban's collaborator Lisa Ullmann and published in English in 1975 (Laban, 1975). From the romantic style of Laban's writing it is no surprise that scholars consider it to 'contain both omissions and inaccuracies' (Jeschke, 2000: 101). However, it is obvious that the book represents a certain period of his life (and his immersion in a specific political circumstance) and should therefore be addressed with this in mind. Laban's narrative style reveals his own personality of remembering, recounting and registering his life and labour in a storytelling fashion. With no clear chronological orientation, it is organised around the themes of Laban's major dance performances, therefore omitting most of the politics in which he was involved.

Laban published a large number of books in German and in English responding to different areas of research and interests, which he engaged in throughout his career. A comprehensive listing of Laban's publications (from magazine articles and programme notes to full monographs) can be found in the annotated bibliography offered by Maletic (1987: Appendix IV) and in Preston-Dunlop (1998b: 280-285). Preston-Dunlop (1998b) numbers seven monographs published in German (from 1920 to 1935) and five monographs published in English (from 1942 to 1956), added to two posthumously published books in English edited by Laban's close collaborator Lisa Ullmann. Furthermore, Preston-Dunlop counts seventy-two articles authored and published by Laban throughout his life and eleven that were published posthumously.

With regards to the unpublished sources there are a number of archives (personal and public collections) that house Laban's manuscripts, lectures, drawings, photographs, and videos. The following are the larger public collections: the *Laban Archive* housed in the National Resource Centre for Dance (University of Surrey, UK); *Laban Archive* housed

at Trinity Laban's Laban Library and Archive (London, UK); *The John Hodgson Collection*, housed in the University of Leeds (UK); *Tanzarchiv* in Leipzig and Cologne (Germany); Susan Perrottet's personal archive at *Kunsthaus* (Zurich, Switzerland) and the *Collection Knust* in the *Centre National de la Danse* (Paris, France). Preston-Dunlop (1998b: xi-xii) mentions a list of other minor and private archives that are scattered across Europe<sup>3</sup>, and composed of materials that were kept by individual people throughout their lives (Franco, 2007). Thus each collection reflects the particular interest of the collector and displays the period of time in which the material was generated (which is extremely important when considering Laban's eclectic career). It is important to highlight that when a historian or researcher chooses an archive with which to work, he or she is developing a particular understanding of Laban's heritage.

These primary published and unpublished sources not only reveal Laban's theories but also display his scientific character, reflected in his routine of observing (movement and behaviour) and documenting his inquiries and analysis in writing. The sources demonstrate his method of retrieving data from movement behaviour (see Laban, (1980) for examples of this *modus operandi*) and associating it to other disciplines in order to compose his Art of Movement. According to John Hodgson (Hodgson, 2001: 32), Laban's own writings corresponded to the way he developed his practical and artistic work: not concerned with shape and pattern, but rather prompting the 'dramatic, the narrative, the mythological' (*idem*).

The literature reviewed above offers a glimpse at the large amount of published and unpublished primary source materials related to Laban's discourse. This reveals the curatorial act (Hammergren, 2004: 22) of both the researcher who made choices regarding sources as well as the selection of each individual author who kept (or even discarded) evidence of Laban's activities. It is this type of curatorial activity that we can now observe in the evaluation of the secondary sources.

## 4.2 Secondary Sources

Among the secondary sources or histories of Laban and his scholarship are the publications produced by Laban's close collaborators, the second and third generation of artist-researchers, and historians who embarked on archival research. While comparing and contrasting these sources I consider the context and perspectives of Laban praxis drawn by the authors which, as discussed, influence the composition of what is understood as Laban's heritage. Hence, to develop this analysis I avoid judgement regarding the degrees of accuracy of the publications, to reveal instead the subjectivity of each work.

When examining these sources I prioritised the identification of the framework used by the authors when combining their personal experience with the source materials available to them. This perspective fosters an understanding of how the biographers' strategies affected the histories told. This promotes an ambiguous nature integrating a 'polysemic structure of meaning making' (Hammergren, 2004: 30). Essentially, Hammergren argues that it is not a matter of considering the sources as primary or secondary but of understanding that 'different sources may render simultaneous versions' of a specific event (2004: 24). Mediating the sources under this lens, instead of ranking their importance based on their primary or secondary nature, or even the degree of relationship between the author and Laban, I chose to include all available sources. In this way I evidenced the patterns of 'translation, displacement and contradiction' (Nye in Hammergren, 2004: 24) or traditions, translations and transmissions (Franco, 2007) that the sources propose in relation to Laban's discourse.

The detailed and extended biographies on Laban's life were composed by Valerie Preston-Dunlop (1998b), Evelyn Dörr (2008), John Hodgson (Hodgson, 2001) and Karen Bradley (2009). As an English pupil of Laban, Preston-Dunlop (1998b) wrote a circumstantial biography, which involved the political surroundings of Laban's life endeavours. Preston-Dunlop's monograph might be the most well-known publication that describes Laban's life in a detailed chronological manner. Despite her initial

acknowledgement of the sources and archives that she drew on throughout her study (providing a great database of archival materials of Laban), she does not include references to these sources in the text. The reader is left without the possibility of tracing back the information Preston-Dunlop presents, which leaves academics and historians rather uncomfortable, questioning the reliability of her work (Franco, 2007; Karina and Kant, 2004). On the other hand, Preston-Dunlop discloses detailed facts of Laban's life and the development of his praxis that seem to be a product of the blending of archival work with her own experience of closely collaborating with Laban for more than a decade. In this sense her work reveals Laban from the eyes of an experienced practitioner who has a thorough understanding of Laban praxis. The monograph, which appears to be based on her 'fascination with the subject', provides a 'subjective and romantic narrative of Laban's life' (Jeschke, 2000: 103), which potentially lacks a critical perspective on the material. However, despite lacking a critical responsibility, Preston-Dunlop's work is certainly a map of Laban's life that has helped practitioners in the field to develop a general understanding of his life achievements.

Another thorough and lengthy biographical enterprise comes from the German theatre scholar Evelyn Dörr (2008), who produced a significant monograph of Laban's life and work. Offering perhaps a more academic scholarly approach, Dörr informatively references her sources throughout the text, providing details of Laban's activities in relation to the rise of the National Socialist regime, and allowing the reader to follow her narrative and the archives she drew on. In fact, her work primarily focuses on the stages of Laban's life and work prior to his period in England. Most likely this is due to her archival research being primarily based in continental Europe. These characteristics may have facilitated her unique perspective on Laban's artistic and choreographic practice, which had been poorly covered in previous writings. Overall her monograph develops a narrative flow of Laban's life. The author contextualises Laban's moves and the social-historical contexts surrounding him to provide an understanding of his endeavours in relation to his contemporary times.



Another extensive biography is the work of the English theatre scholar John Hodgson (2001). Hodgson produced a monograph which is apparently based on his personal experience with Laban's praxis as well as his personal archive material that he 'stowed away [from Germany] in three backpacks' (Franco, 2007: 91). McCaw (2013) explains that Hodgson worked on this biography during twenty-three years. However, Hodgson's text contains no references to his sources, which invites the assumption that the narrative is based solely or primarily on his experiential point of view of Laban's trajectory. Yet, Bridson (2015) explains that because Hodgson was not German speaker, she was actually the one who carried out all research throughout European archives. Unfortunately Hodgson omits this fact in his text, which suggests even more contradiction to his publication. Despite the fact that Hodgson presents a large amount of general information on Laban's life and personality he does not go into depth on any aspect. In a unique fashion, however, Hodgson assigns a section of his monograph to introduce possibilities for putting Laban's theories into practice. Hodgson's reviews of Laban's main books published both in Germany (prior to the Second World War) and in England (post Second World War) also provide a good resource. Despite the contradictions mentioned above and its weaknesses, as Karen Bradley (Bradley, 2002: 109) argues, the book (and its background) contributes to 'the richness of tales surrounding Laban'.

Karen Bradley also wrote a biography of Laban (Bradley, 2009), which contains not only a detailed review of Laban's life and work, but also an analysis of Laban's book *Mastery of Movement* (Laban, 1980). Bradley claims that her historical and archival research was done through a 'movement analyst' perspective: observing the data and attending to its details and nuances (Bradley, 2009: preface). This perspective grants her monograph a phenomenological perspective that interweaves her movement analyst experience with the archives and former biographies published on Laban.

Earlier biographical works on Laban's life include a publication by Hodgson and Preston-Dunlop (1990), which presents a shorter and generalised overview of Laban's life, including the different strands in which his work unravels. It offers informative sections on: Laban's dance works; his writings as well as writings about him; and a chronological

account of the main events of his life. However, similar to each of the authors' own monographs (mentioned above), there is a lack of references to support the claims made. An even earlier work comes from Samuel Thornton (1971), who produced one of the first monographs (in English) to give an account of Laban's Art of Movement practice. Thornton (2013) explained that his work was based on the experiences and interviews he retrieved from Laban's fellow collaborators. Equally, these two works do not contextualise the political background along Laban's life.

John Foster (Foster, 1977) introduced a controversial monograph on Laban's work. Foster's educational background demonstrates his own support for Laban's educational principles. He reveals a number of controversies related to Laban's life, starting from the title of his monograph that spells Laban's first name with a 'ph' instead of an 'f' - as 'Rudolph Laban'. One of the valuable issues highlighted by Foster is the negotiation of 'truths' involving Laban's persona: as he puts it, 'even Laban's name is open to question' (Foster, 1977:11).<sup>4</sup> Apart from giving information on Laban's life, Foster attempts to debate the use of Laban's work in schools/education and as part of the Higher Education (HE) physical education curriculum. However, Preston-Dunlop (Preston-Dunlop, 1980a: 40) argues that since Foster was not part of any 'dance activities under Laban's tutelage, he did not develop an objective assessment of 'Laban's legacy'.

Marion Kant and Lilian Karina (2004) produced a historiography introducing a unique analytic stance to Laban's history. Kant (2004b) sees their survey as an attempt to deconstruct the dominant and authoritative approach established in previous biographies of Laban. The book aims to affirm the authors own versions of a certain period of Laban's life discussing his involvement with the National Socialist regime in Germany. Not focussed entirely on a biographical narrative of Laban's life, the book illuminates, with archival evidence, the period of the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany. The material intends to 'break the silence' (Kant, 2004b: x) and draw attention to the repercussions of politics in dance and vice-versa. Thus, the book presents an important perspective of Laban's period in Germany.

There is also an influential and amply referenced monograph, which is not strictly focussed on Laban's life, but rather on his work. Despite having received sharp criticism from renowned Laban-practitioners (North, 1988; Preston-Dunlop, 1988), Vera Maletic's (1987) book is a major reference for the understanding of Laban's body of knowledge.<sup>5</sup> Maletic presents an introductory biographical account of Laban's life, which, despite its compactness, is extremely informative, and in fact it is acknowledged and referenced by all other later work published on the subject. Maletic's project was a precursor in the field of Laban studies as she edited a detailed guide of Laban praxis that includes a thorough debate on Laban's Choreology. She traced the evolution of each strand from the beginning of Laban's career in Germany to its end in England. This material is essential to the understanding of the evolution of Laban praxis. Maletic wisely highlights gaps in the Laban scholarship which future research could illuminate, such as Laban's own vision that his Choreutics should be taken forward; the spread of his notation system and in depth study of dance history (Maletic, 1987: 182).

Minor biographical material referring to specific periods and personas of Laban's life can be found in chapters of publications by the following: Martin Green (1986), who refers back to Laban's period in Monte Verita in Switzerland (from 1913 to 1919); Isabel Launay (1996), who gives a perspective of Laban's participation in the emergence of European modern dance; Isa Partsch-Bergson (1994), who compares the emergence of modern dance in Europe and in the United States, and discusses the trajectories of Jooss, Wigman and Laban (Partsch-Bergson and Bergson 2004); and Toepfer (1997), who includes Laban's activities within the German body culture movement of the beginning of the twentieth century.

Apart from these major references, there is a large selection of publications which include sections referring to Laban's life and work based on the authors' individual experiences of collaborating with Laban. These reinforce the subjectivity of individual practitioners with specific aspects of Laban praxis. This material can be found in early articles of *The Art of Movement Guild Magazine* (ongoing publication). Examples of these are Gordon Curl's series of controversial articles that debate Laban's mystical influences

(Curl, 1966, 1967a, 1967b) and Lisa Ullmann's series on Space Harmony (Laban and Ullmann, 1971). Besides, valuable information on Laban can be found in Mary Wigman's biography (Wigman, 1975), in Irmgard Bartenieff's *Fundamentals™* treatise (Bartenieff, 1980), and in Warren Lamb's memories (McCaw, 2006). Also relevant memories can be retrieved from the documentary *Laban's Legacy* (Reisel, 2008), which contains interviews with Laban's former pupils: Geraldine Stephenson, Warren Lamb, Anne Hutchinson Guest and Jean Newlove.

#### **4.3 Sources of Praxis and Dance Theatre**

Considering specific strands of Laban praxis, there are a number of secondary sources that were developed by practitioners who encountered Laban at a specific stage of his career. These practitioners took forward particular elements of Laban's thought and transformed them into collaborative enterprises. One such scheme was the advancement of Laban's notation system. This system comprises a structured scholarship that has been evolving in parallel with Laban's Choreology. The two major exponents of this work have been the *International Council of Kinetography Laban* (ICKL) and the Dance Notation Bureau (DNB). The ICKL has been active since 1959 with the intention of supporting the continuity of notation practice and research, and organising biannual conferences since then. The DNB was founded in 1940 by practitioners who emigrated from Europe to the USA. It has been an active institution based in New York, publishing a monthly online bulletin (Dance Notation Bureau, 2015). Exponent practitioners in the field have been Albrecht Knust (1979) and Anne Hutchinson Guest (2005), who developed and promoted Laban's notation system from the notation's early days. Today the notation system has spread throughout the globe (with evidence in the proceedings of the ICKL biannual conferences).

While surveying the resources of Laban praxis it is important to flag the contribution that the Laban scholar Jeffrey Longstaff offers to the community. Longstaff has produced

an independent online database - *Laban-Analysis* - (Longstaff, n.d.), which provides free access to his research on Laban praxis, specifically the material related to Laban's Choreutics or Space Harmony. He has generously opened to the public not only his research outcomes, such as his PhD thesis (Longstaff, 1996), but also his personal research notes on diverse topics related (or connected to) Laban praxis. Among his writings, Longstaff has made available his personal translation of Laban's *Choreographie* (originally published in German and never translated into any other language). I find this type of generosity is unique in the field, as one rarely encounters any similar provision of free open access to information and research.

With regards to the way in which Laban's practices and choreographic work contribute to the source materials, there has not been much documentation available for analysis (Preston-Dunlop, 2013b: 31). Maletic (1987:15) points out that there are brief descriptions of his dance theatre choreographic work in German dance magazines from the 1920's, such as *Schriftanz* (see examples of these articles in (Preston-Dunlop and Lahusen, 1990). Contrarily, Dörr (2008) gives more details of Laban's dance theatre works throughout her book. There are brief sections of footage (available in the Laban Archive at the NRCD) from dance practices in the Art of Movement Studio in England. However, they offer only a limited selection of clips sampling movement training.

Dörr (2008: 213-240) reveals how Laban's dance theatre works flourished in 1912, had its peak in the 1920's, declined and ended in 1936 when his career in dance theatre practice was interrupted (Laban, 1975: 183). In an attempt to revive Laban's dance theatre practice Preston-Dunlop and Alison Curtis-Jones have been working on the recreation of a number of Laban's dance theatre works dating from the 1910's and 1920's (Preston-Dunlop, 2013b; Preston-Dunlop and Sayers, 2011), documented in (Burt, Sayers and Preston-Dunlop, 2008; Preston-Dunlop, 1992, 2013a; Preston-Dunlop and Curtis-Jones, 2013a, 2013b).<sup>6</sup>

Regarding Laban's movement choir practice<sup>7</sup> there are small accounts of the practice spread throughout the publications mentioned above. Vague descriptions and accounts of his community or amateur dances are available scattered in his autobiography

(Laban, 1975). Yet Laban does not provide detailed descriptions of the actual combination and type of movement involved in these pieces (as he does, for example, in the three mime plays in his later *Mastery of Movement*). In her descriptions of Laban's movement choirs, however, Dörr (2008:103-6) has shed some light on the type of practices they involved. Yet, we must remember that Dörr based herself in archival research and not in experiences with the practice (at least she does not evidence any experience). In addition, there are excerpts of descriptions of movement choir in Green (1986), Hodgson and Preston-Dunlop (1990), and Hodgson (2001).

Nevertheless, the practice of movement choir can be said to be rather controversial. While the above authors flag the festive and social activism of the activity, Shripton (2012) associated Laban's movement choirs with Nazi parades. The recent upsurge of new insights into the scholarship and its practice demonstrates that the topic is still a site of investigation.

There are a number of sources that address the practice of Laban's Choreology. As a primary source, Rudolf Laban (1980) offers step-by-step instructions of how to execute movement sequences. Laban (1963) also includes suggestions of movements which can be done to achieve the Effort qualities mentioned. However, in the later source no detail of their performance is offered. Other references are secondary sources produced by the first generation of Laban's pupils (Newlove, 1993, 2004; Preston-Dunlop, 1963). Although the publications are instructive and user-friendly, they offer limited details on how to execute the movements suggested. In contrast, Preston-Dunlop (Preston-Dunlop, Carlisle and Edmunds, 2008; Preston-Dunlop, 1984b) offers a detailed manual for practicing Laban's Choreutics theory. Regarding Laban's Efforts or Eukinetics, Bartenieff (1980) include sparse sections with instructions for embodying Laban's Efforts. Also, Maletic (2005) has offered a manual accompanied by a DVD for training dynamics. Overall these publications express an endeavour to demonstrate that despite the complexity of the written theory, this results from or complements a detailed movement practice.

The limited availability of documentation of Laban's choreographic work and teaching practice/style disguise the common endorsement of the written over the embodied. The dance historian Ananya Chatterjee (Chatterjee, 2004: 144) identified that text is often used to validate practices, so that embodied knowledge can remain in history. Laban's heritage reinforces this. In fact, this has resulted in the development of a perspective over Laban's practices that is deeply embedded in written theoretical products (books). The various publications and extensive archives on Laban, alongside the fact that his artistic productions are not a 'reproducible repertory' (Preston-Dunlop and Sayers, 2011: 7) make Laban's scholarship appear as a set of books, written theory or movement analysis. This readily distinguishes his praxis from other performing artists who left a legacy of oeuvres to be analysed and reproduced. Among the source materials, the publications from the above authors illustrate the presence of practice within Laban's scholarship; nonetheless I observe that the understanding of Laban praxis still remains enclosed in the bodies of its practitioners. This detachment (of the theory from the practice) is contrary to Laban praxis and overall philosophy, which necessarily contains practice and theory. This point is crucial here, as it extends throughout this thesis in the way I consider the transmission of Laban praxis and its incorporation by artists and practitioners.

## **5. Laban Praxis**

The praxis that Laban devised is directly connected to the diverse activities that he was engaged with throughout his life. From his early designs and drawings (Laban and Ullmann, 1984; Moore, 2009) to his experiments with movement, conceptualisations and later on through work with multidisciplinary collaborators, Laban devised systems of training, analysing and teaching expressive movement. One of the first endeavours of his career as a movement artist was to establish dance's independence from the other art forms (music, theatre, and opera). To support his arguments he nurtured, throughout his entire career, what he called the 'science of dance' (Maletic, 1987: 13), attempting to

develop a scholarship which would bring movement and dance practices into a scientific realm. Bodmer (2011: XIX) concludes that:

Rudolf Laban's uniqueness was his ability to combine extraordinary artistic talent with a real analytical ability, almost scientific in nature, and to work out ways of systematising the study, and of course the notation of human movement.

With the intent of combining practice and theory, Laban devised three areas of research: *Choreosophy* as the philosophy, ethics and aesthetics of dance; *Choreology*, which embraces the spatial and temporal laws of the experience of movement; and *Choreography* which responded to Laban's search for a 'literacy' (Laban, 1956) that covers both discursive articulations as well as symbolic representations (which later became the *Kinetography Laban*, also known as *Labanotation*). These three strands represented Laban's search for the 'grammar and syntax of the language of dance' (Maletic, 1987:12). The most popular (and disseminated) aspects of Laban praxis are his *Choreology* (systematisation of principles of human movement, sub-categorised as *Choreutics* and *Eukinetics*) and his system of movement notation.

Laban defined *Choreutics* as the 'art or science' that deals with the 'analysis and synthesis of movement' which also includes 'all kinds of bodily, emotional and mental movements and their notation' (1966: 8). Preston-Dunlop later translated the term as 'the study of harmonic spatial forms and the manner in which they are embodied in movement' (1984b: vii). Laban's *Choreutics* involves his investigation of the space that surrounds the person or dancer and how the movement made with the body occupies and/or ephemerally traces or architects this space. Inspired by the laws of music harmony and platonic geometry, Laban developed what he called 'space harmony' (Laban, 1966), which included a set of 'movement scales' for the dancer's training.

The mechanics of motion influenced by the individual's inner intent (impulses) belonged to a different discipline. Laban's analysis of the characteristics of movement such as their kinetic, dynamic, rhythmic and metric content was devoted to the discipline



of Eukinetics. He classified the components of movement according to qualities that regulate its intensity such as force, time, space and flux (Maletic, 1987: 93). Towards the end of his career, when Laban established himself in England, his Eukinetics became known as *Efforts* (Laban, 1980; Laban and Lawrence, 1947). He defined the movement qualities (force, time, space and flux) under categories which he called 'motion factors'. The combination of motion factors express the inner attitude from the mover, or its Efforts (Bradley, 2009: 31).

Laban's Choreology then is the scaffolding of Laban's movement praxis. From the principles of the body in space (Choreutics) and its dynamic qualities (Eukinetics) Laban developed links to diverse interdisciplinary practices. There is a wide range of disciplines where Laban's movement principles were able to find fertile grounds to develop interdisciplinary associations between a certain knowledge and human movement (McCaw, 2011: 2). Maletic (1987: 28) adds that 'Laban's drive to push forward was so impulsive that he sometimes lost connection with a work before it was completed'. Nonetheless, through the work of Laban's collaborators we can grasp the extraordinary variety of directions in which Laban praxis evolved. I list below the main strands that evolved out of Laban praxis. The strands are classified according to their connection with Laban: first, second and third generation of Laban studies heritage. With this classification I create an image of layers where Laban praxis remains as the nucleus of the emerging practices.

The first generation of the heritage of Laban praxis includes the strands of practice and research that were developed alongside and together with Laban, while he was still alive. These are: *Ausdruckstanz*, devised in Germany, also known as German Modern Dance (see Manning, 2006); Art of Movement, developed alongside the English Art of Movement Studio; Modern Educational Dance, which corresponds to Laban's research of dance in and as an educational practice (see Laban, 1963; Preston-Dunlop, 1963; Redfern, 1973); Movement/ Action Profile, envisioned by Warren Lamb - while working closely with Laban in the 1950's - and further integrated in the work of Irmgard Bartenieff (Davies, 2001; Lamb, 1965, 1979); Notation, which was divided into Kinetography and

Labanotation, but has been reunited as a single system (Guest, 2005; Knust, 1979; Laban, 1956); Dance Movement Therapy, which was initiated in England while Laban was still alive (see Association of Dance Movement Psychotherapy, 2013); and dance theatre, which represents Laban's early German choreographic practice of theatrical dance making (see Preston-Dunlop, 2013).

A second generation of strands of practice and developments of Laban's theories did not include Laban's direct participation but were nevertheless carried out by Laban's veteran pupils. Those are: Laban Movement Analysis (LMA), developed by Irmgard Bartenieff (see Bartenieff, 1980; Hackney, 2010); Choreological Studies, developed by Valerie Preston-Dunlop in collaboration with the Laban Centre<sup>8</sup> (Preston-Dunlop, 1998a; Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2010); and Movement Pattern Analysis, envisioned by Warren Lamb (see Moore, 2005).

The third generation of strands is known as the work emerging from the pupils of Irmgard Bartenieff. These practices and theories were inspired by the somatic and therapeutic perspectives that Bartenieff brought from Laban praxis. The most relevant are: Kestenberg Movement Profile (KMP), developed by Judith Kestenberg and related to the psychological development of children (see Kestenberg, 1999); and Body-Mind Centering, developed by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (see Cohen 1993). Merging Bartenieff's work with Wigman's dance philosophy, Mary Starks Whitehouse created the Authentic Movement (AM) method, which is developed in both artistic and therapeutic environments (see Whitehouse, 1999).<sup>9</sup>

These second and third generations of praxis consist of what Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg (2010) have characterised as the 'beyond' developments of Laban's theories. This concept suggests that Laban's work was transformed according to the subjectivities of the practitioners involved in it, or who took it forward beyond Laban's initial framework. This situation opens to debate questions of heritage and legacy that involve Laban's praxis. To address these questions I use Foucault's theories and propose the understanding of Laban praxis as a discourse.

## 6. Laban Discourse

To develop an understanding of Laban praxis and the different strands of practices that evolved from Laban's movement principles I use Foucault's concept of discourse. The joint efforts of Laban and his collaborators' practical and theoretical achievements can be examined as a unified body of knowledge instead of independent trademarks<sup>10</sup>. This is because they all originated in the same system of principles and epistemology, having practice and theory at their heart as a single activity, which combines physical, psychological, expressive, educational and aesthetic knowledge. The unification of practices/theories into a single body of knowledge aligns itself with Foucault's philosophy as Foucault associated bodies of knowledge to the production of discourses (McHoul and Grace, 1995). McHoul and Grace argue that Foucault's discourse involves 'the field of "what can be said"' (1995: 25). Foucault (2002: 120) himself articulates discourse as referring to a group of verbal performances produced by a group of signs. For Foucault, discourse can be whatever (practice) constrains or enables thinking (practicing) within certain historical limits, thus developing 'well bounded areas of social knowledge' (McHoul and Grace, 1995: 31).

Foucault's concept of discourse can be taken to identify Laban's work as a specific set of practices and scholarship circumscribed by a 'historical rim' (*idem*), responding to its particular time. In fact, Laban established a 'movement language' (Laban, 1966) or Choreology, that can itself be considered as a certain kind of knowledge (as suggested in the Introduction chapter), and which he strived to place in action throughout his life and artistic enterprises. Laban's work reflects his striving to develop a 'language' for dance that would convey that which underlies (physically and mentally) movement expression (Maletic, 1987: 171-2). Furthermore, McCaw (2011:19) points out that Laban's project faced the challenge of expressing the kinaesthetic experience through the written medium. In this case, when language becomes the means 'through which the field

“speaks” of itself to itself’, it meets the possibility of being taken as a discourse (Danaher, Schirato and Webb, 2000: 33).

Foucault’s use of the term discourse is not only related to written language. He distances discourse from the concept of linguistic system - a grammar (text) - and moves towards the concept of discipline, in the sense of scholarly discipline as well as disciplinary institutions (Foucault, 2002: 121). Taking a descriptive track, Foucault outlines the limits of each domain, evidencing their autonomy (*idem*). The understanding of discourse as an autonomous discipline/ body of knowledge (McHoul and Grace, 1995: 27) offers the possibility to designate the entire field of Laban studies/practices as one discourse.

To have Foucault’s discourse epistemology illuminating Laban’s body of knowledge surpasses, as Foucault suggests, the analysis of its lexical contents (which either defines the elements of meaning or its semantic structures). For Foucault, the lexical organisation is usually present in the surface of a body of knowledge. Laban’s body of knowledge becomes discursive when it is taken as a ‘tangled plurality’ (Foucault, 2002: 53) of objects, composed of systematised practices that are formed and at the same time deformed by each individual who interacts theoretically and/or practically with it.

To conceive of Laban’s work as a type of discourse is to accept that Laban developed a set of practices, concepts and terms that denoted the art of dance (and human expressive movement), further named ‘Art of Movement’ (Hodgson, 2001: 126). Laban attempted to explain his Art of Movement by stressing that it comprises more than dance itself. It includes all dance-like activities such as social and stage/theatrical dancing, behaviour patterns, game playing and performance of industrial activities (Laban, 1963: 9). To accept Laban’s Art of Movement as a discourse, the praxis has to be taken in its entirety and not dismantled into object-units to be analysed through a magnifying glass and arranged into groups of signs (groups of individual practices). Following Foucault, Laban’s body of knowledge as a discourse would become ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak or refer to’ (Foucault, 2002: 54), such as the theorisation of Laban’s practices.

In addition, when setting Laban's Art of Movement in relation to Foucault's philosophy, the use of discourse allows for a 'counter-reading' (McHoul and Grace, 1995: 27) of Laban praxis' historical condition, offering a possibility for a critique and renewal of its understandings. Hence this perspective enables us to ascribe Laban's body of knowledge to its ontological field and scope of action and include the full spectrum of practices that have been done under Laban's name. This means that not only Choreology and Notation are taken as discourse but also the work developed by the second and third generations of practitioners (as mentioned in the previous section). This unfolding of Laban's heritage into strands of research and practice (such as the strands of *Ausdruckstanz*, LMA, Choreological Studies, Action Profile, AM, KMP, DMT and etc.) suggests a larger mapping of his discursive field. This mapping follows Foucault's technology of tracing the occasion (or practices) where discourse occurs (where the principles are used as a structural compound of the practice). Also the mapping involves considering the subjectivities of discourse creators, establishing connections among apparently different practices. This procedure places the practices in dialogue with each other, referring back to Laban praxis, and attending to the particular discursive formation of the field.

### **Conclusion: Understanding the Laban Heritage**

Rudolf Laban has been an important figure in the history of dance and movement as an art form in the twentieth century. Despite his death in 1958, his heritage of movement practice, theories of movement analysis and notation still reverberate in the arts practice, education and scholarship of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As a 'multiform thinker' (McCaw, 2011: 2), Laban had numerous collaborators, pupils and followers who not only participated in the development of his praxis but were also responsible for maintaining, advertising, explaining and updating his scholarship. With a life filled with controversies,

Laban has been a major reference in the emergence of the European modern dance and movement studies disciplines.

Laban's individual history has fired a number of discussions involving his private life, his religious inclinations and his political moves. Laban's endeavours have inspired a number of scholars to challenge themselves and each other in striving to depict Laban's persona and bring forth an understanding of his discourse. Given the controversial context that surrounds Laban praxis, this chapter presented a selection of available source materials on the topic. The sources were categorised as primary or secondary and also separated according to their function - offering either a biography of Laban or a discussion of his praxis.

In the Laban studies scholarship there is a collection of accounts that introduce and unpack Laban's life and work achievements. As highlighted throughout the chapter, each source corresponds to an individual study that combines archival material and the experience of the researcher with either Laban's life or work (or both). Their resulting narratives demonstrate not only a perspective of Laban's life but also the background of the author who published it: a historian (Dörr, 2008; Karina and Kant, 2004), a dancer (Preston-Dunlop, 1998b), a pedagogue (Foster, 1977; Hodgson, 2001; Thornton, 1971), a scholar (Dörr, 2008; McCaw, 2011) or of movement analyst (Bradley, 2009). The diversity in the perspectives developed in these works offers a 'messiness of claims to Laban legacy' (Bradley, 2002: 106). This condition is clearly revealed when one critically examines the collection of biographic accounts of Laban, as I have demonstrated.

Regarding the sources themselves, it is apparent that the biographical narratives written by Laban's pupils (secondary sources) overtake the one published by Laban himself (primary sources). This indicates that there is more published information available from interpretations and representations of Laban than from his own voice. This condition fosters, as Bradley suggests, a situation where Laban's character becomes dubious, as it is difficult to judge which author is right or wrong. Nonetheless the different perspectives that are depicted of Laban contribute to the composition of his multiple personas. Laban's biographers and collaborators drew pictures of Laban that

corresponded to the unique experience that they had with his persona. The use of the term persona to designate Laban's combination of characters is a conscious choice, which acknowledges the different experiences with either Laban's life (archive) and/or his theories (practices).

This chapter proposed an engagement with Laban's work as a body of knowledge that both gathers and scatters expressive movement knowledge. In this sense, Laban's Choreology (Choreutics and Eukinetics) and his system of movement notation, alongside the strands of practice that evolved from its principles, are seen as comprising the body of his discourse. Framing discourse in a Foucauldian sense offers the possibility of viewing Laban's work as a tangled plurality of practices, which thus opens up to the possibility of a critical renewal of its insights. If one takes into consideration Laban's multiple characters and the ample scope of his discourse he or she can also understand how Laban praxis can assume diverse roles.

The perspective of Laban drawn in this chapter sets the grounds for the discussion of Laban's discourse in relation to the scholarship that evolves from it. The inclusive and critical perspective on Laban's life and work allows us to see beyond single experiences, which, as I have argued, provide only a partial context of Laban and his discourse. Nevertheless the investigation of the various sources frames the entanglements present in and around the discourse. Similar complexities are also evident when it comes to the transmission of Laban praxis to future generations. These also reverberate in the ways in which Laban praxis is being contemporarily accessed, embodied by practitioners and researched. Most importantly, the complexity emerging from the range of interpretations of the discourse influences the way it will continue to exist in future generations of practitioners. To address such issues, the following parts of this thesis combine historical and ethnographical methods, as I describe in the following chapter. This enables me to tackle the past and present scapes of Laban praxis, in Europe, Brazil, and beyond.

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#### Notes to Chapter One:

<sup>1</sup> This name is associated with the film *Rashomon* (1950) by the Japanese director Akira Kurosawa, and the latter term *Rashomon Effect*, developed in order to argue, understand and combine different personal versions of the truth from a given fact/happening. The term began to be used scientifically

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in the early nineteen eighties by the Anthropologist Karl G. Heider, who borrows the wording to make an “allusion to the idea of contradictory truths” (Heider, 1988: 74) Poetically, *Rashomon Syndrome* was used to entitle a book of poetry by the English writer Pamela Gillilan (1998). Gillilan uses the term to combine a number of poems she wrote that account her view upon her surrounding daily life.

<sup>2</sup> Hammergren (2004: 22) uses the term ‘curation’ to refer to the act of selecting materials to be stored in the archive. She describes the notes, scraps, sketches, drafts, and so on can be kept or disposed by the author him/herself or the person who stores and/or organises a collection.

<sup>3</sup> Despite not having set my research as an historical-archival enterprise, during three years I visited, on a regular basis, the Laban Archive (NRCD, University of Surrey, UK) to randomly browse over his personal notes and drawings. One of the practical outcomes of these visits was my practice-based investigation of Laban’s drawings which resulted in a selection of videos called “Labananimations” (Scialom and Melo, 2012) and a paper presented at the Performance Studies International Conference, Stanford, California, USA (Scialom, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> From four different written versions of Laban’s name the author chose this one to entitle his book due to the origin of the source from which he acquired this spelling: the mason Oscar Bienz, a pupil of Laban in the early 1910’s. In a personal letter to Foster (attached in the appendix of the book) Bienz referred to Laban using a ‘ph’ to spell Rudolph instead of ‘f’, which Laban himself used when signing his name (Foster, 1977: 11).

<sup>5</sup> The criticism that this book received flagged the politics present in the field that I discuss throughout this thesis. For example, Preston-Dunlop (1988:78) criticises Maletic for drawing on Laban’s book *Choreographie* (from 1926) as a reference, claiming that Maletic’s book is over-intellectualised. Similarly, Marion North (1988: 409) qualified Maletic’s writing as ‘imperative and static’. North misleadingly continues by stating that the book can only suit the average dance reader and that parts of the narrative are ‘questionable’ and ‘out of context. (North, 1988: 410). My understanding of these reviews is that there is a complex politics involved in the field which leads its practitioners to get into a personal level to review the publications of fellow scholars.

<sup>6</sup> I have also participated in three of Curtis-Jones’s workshops where she gives practical examples of her method for recreating Laban’s choreographies. In the workshops Curtis-Jones leads the participants through the embodiment of choreological principles (such as Efforts and Space Harmony) to perform extracts of Laban’s dances. The activity itself is extremely inclusive, as it depends on the physical capacities of each participant to follow the movement principles suggested by Curtis-Jones. These workshops are a valuable opportunity to embody physicality of Laban praxis in choreographic context.

<sup>7</sup> Green (Green, 1986: 101) explained that Laban’s movement choirs were: ‘large groups combined and recombined in numerous variations do dramatize the power of dance to accommodate difference with the struggle for communal unity. Although the movement choirs appeared in [Laban’s] theatrical productions... their expressive values much more evident in improvised or appropriated contexts’.

<sup>8</sup> The Laban Art of Movement Studio was launched when Laban was alive in the 1948 in Manchester, North of England. It was relocated to Addlestone in Surrey (South East of England) in 1953. In 1975 it was renamed as the Laban Centre as it moved to the city of London. In 2005 it merged with Trinity College of Music and changed names once again to become what today (2015) is known as the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance.

<sup>9</sup> Despite the nomination of a third generation of practice I am not excluding the possibility of other third generation strands of practice which might have emerged in non-English speaking countries and have not been advertised worldwide.

<sup>10</sup> I use the word trademark to refer to styles of strands of Laban praxis. This is because some strands that emerged from LMA were established as a trademark. This is the case of Bartenieff Fundamentals and Body-Mind Centering.



## **Chapter Two: Methodology and Theory - Frameworks to Voice**

### **Laban Praxis**

#### **1. Setting methodological Grounds**

This chapter introduces and discusses the methodology that was used to investigate the transmission of Laban praxis and its practices in Brazil. It covers the selection of methods that guided the collection and analysis of data. This methodology evolves under two frameworks: oral history and ethnography. Having composed the territory of my study with current practitioners from the British and Brazilian scenes of practice, I developed a particular understanding of Laban's discourse to compare the two.

To begin I discuss my use of oral history and describe how I collected and processed the data. I examine my use of Foucault's genealogy to structure the discussion on the making of a history of the present (as most of the people involved in this research are still alive and active), voicing the practitioners who contributed to the building of the field of Laban practices in Brazil. Then I present my practice of ethnography, considering my use of the method to investigate the overall field of Laban studies and the work of three Brazilian Laban-practitioners.

The fact that Laban has a worldwide outreach and is practised in all five continents of the world (Hand, 2015) necessitated that I find a way to deal with the challenge of grasping its entirety. The perspective I adopted over the field then was influenced by my choice of residence during the course of the research. Coming from São Paulo, Brazil, I based myself in the south of England for four years (first in Guildford, Surrey, then in London). While based in England I developed a specific perspective of the field related to a later phase in Laban's life and work. This was informed by two main parameters: firstly the language barrier allowed me to access only the literature available in English; secondly, I was surrounded by practitioners and the history of Laban's practices in

England, which bears a large and defined heritage. This circumstance allowed me to experience a tradition of Laban-practices that was developed based on Laban's efforts to re-establish his career in English territory during and after the Second World War. My engagement with English Art of Movement also involved experiencing Laban's charismatic and regulating reminiscence including the Laban Guild and the former Laban Art of Movement Studio, from where the memories of most of the English practitioners originate <sup>1</sup>. Meanwhile, I also had the chance to explore the small group of Laban/Bartenieff practitioners (mainly located in Scotland, where a LMA certification programme is running) and the community of Language of Dance (LOD) practices, led by Ann Hutchinson Guest. In addition, I attended weekly European modern dance classes with Vivian Bridson,<sup>2</sup> who allowed me to experience her practitioner's perspective and work involving Laban praxis. To contrast my engagement with these communities of practitioners, I also met academics who focus on articulating Laban's discourse without necessarily having developed an embodied understanding of its practice. Besides, during my time in Europe I encountered the community from the International Council of Kinetography Laban (ICKL), which granted me a completely different perspective on Laban praxis.<sup>3</sup>

Overall, the experience with these different groups/practices shaped my perspective of the discourse, thus influencing the development of this thesis. For example, if I had established myself in the USA, Germany or France (which house established communities of practitioners) I would have been influenced by the heritages of Laban praxis that are present there and the ways in which people have established the field locally. In the USA there is a strong predominance of Laban/Bartenieff practitioners (trained from Bartenieff's somatic practice heritage) as well as a similar community of Laban notators (influenced by the DNB). In Germany I could have encountered the reverberation of Laban's political Nazi collaborations (Koegler, 1974), historical developments of expressionist dance (Manning, 2006), *tanztheater* (Climenhaga, 2013) and an emerging community of LMA practice (Kennedy, 2010). In contrast, French and Italian scholarships on Laban praxis offer a more critical and neutral perspective (Launay,

1996; Ropa, 1988). This shows that each scene and locale is unique, influenced by its history and the practitioners who disseminated the discourse locally.

My effort to experience the field in its technical and political realms (different strands of practice and discourses respectively) allowed my research to evolve within a 'practice-oriented methodology' (Ness, 2004: 124). In addition, throughout the research I attempted to follow Laban's own epistemology (which engages theory and practice in an organic unity) as a framework to investigate his own discourse. As a dancer and Laban-practitioner myself, I was drawn to merge practical and theoretical frameworks to feed into my critical perspective. Likewise, this combination of practice and theory has shaped Laban's discourse and was present throughout his life through the collaboration with numerous artists across Europe (Bradley, 2009; Dörr, 2008; Maletic, 1987; Preston-Dunlop, 1998b). Following this practice-theory-making epistemology or what Carol-Lynne Moore (2014a) has called a 'grounded theory of human movement', I developed the methodology of my research in a Laban-oriented style.

## **2. Combining Methods and Drawing a Critical Perspective**

The stages of conception, data collection, observation, participation and analysis within the practices of oral history, genealogy, ethnography, narrative interview and grounded theory analysis reinforced the qualitative character of my research. My rationale for this combination responds to the nature of the object of research - Laban praxis - and its developments across geographical space and from past to present practices. The wide spectrum of the discourse's existence (which began to be developed in 1912, see Preston-Dunlop, 1989) and the varieties of interpretations developed within it required the use of frameworks that engage with former (history) and current (ethnography) practices. While my interests in transmission and tradition shift the methodological approach towards a historical concern, the acquisition of praxis together with my own participation in different Laban-related workshops shifts the methods towards an ethnographical framework.

The combination of methods has become a common operation in social science and performance research (Knowles and Cole, 2008; Lury and Wakeford, 2012); in dance studies (Desmond, 2000: 45); and dance anthropology (Farnell, 2012; Kaeppler, 1978; Williams, 2004). I have myself embarked on a combination of methods to investigate Laban praxis, as done by Hye Won Hwang (2013) while looking at LMA 'transmigration' to South Korea. Following previous research which combined dance history and ethnography (Buckland, 2006; Ness, 1992; Novack, 1990; O'Shea, 2007), my particular association of the disciplines as Buckland (Buckland, 2006: 3) advises, aimed to merge 'contrasting spheres of space and time'. In fact, Janet O'Shea (2006) explains that when past traditions and present embodiment are the focus of research, two different methodologies need to be addressed in order to retrieve, tackle and discuss the data available. However, Buckland (Buckland, 2002: 442) advises that the methods which are combined should not be merely complementary but also 'dynamically interactive'. This perspective proposes a strategy of constant critical movement between sources of/from the past and data collected in the present, which operated continuously throughout my thesis.

Not only history and ethnography but also my background as a dance practitioner has led me to add my embodied perspective to my research framework. Buckland (2006: vii) explains that the researcher's training influences the ways in which she or he relates to the people and practices under investigation. Within this perspective I approached my investigation as an artist-scholar and Laban-practitioner. Preston-Dunlop (2013b: 32) has already coined a similar practitioner-scholar status when developing historiographical research on Laban's choreographies. Preston-Dunlop proposes a double role for the researcher, who becomes a 'practical historiographer', combining his or her actions as a theoretician with a practitioner's perspective.<sup>4</sup> In this sense, my need to move (my body) while carrying out my research became evident. I fulfilled this need through the use of reflexivity and methodologies associated with dance ethnography that include the researcher's experience as resource for the study; in fact, according to Foster (2011: 3), Ness (2004) and David (2013: 45–46), such an approach has become an established practice in dance studies (further explained on section 4 of this chapter).

From a critical stance, Foucault's theory has strongly influenced and helped frame my research. This is because the poststructuralist philosopher and historian's critical enquiry resonates with my own, empowering my questions and actions for research. Foucault has described research as a field where 'questions of human being, consciousness, origin and the subject emerge, intersect, mingle and separate off' (Foucault, 2002: 18). In line with this thought I began my investigation guided by this philosophical intent, not adhering to any specific method but, as Foucault puts it, 'in the dark' (*idem*: 17). In this sense it was from the contact with the Brazilian Laban-practitioners that my questions regarding past and present practices of Laban's discourse emerged (not the other way around). These questions have influenced the methodological shift (in the ways of collecting and unpacking data) that is evident throughout this thesis.

Despite the critical contributions offered by Foucault's theory, its use in this research also needs further debating. Ness (2011) warns that Foucault's perspective is not at all appropriate for dance studies due to his rejection of phenomenological approaches to the body. Ness, however, reminds us of the 'pragmatic gains' (Ness, 2011: 28) of his critique when applied to the field of dance (such as cross interdisciplinary prestige and politically engaged identity of the discipline of dance studies). It is in line with these pragmatic gains that I adopt Foucauldian theory, looking for the balance between the 'pre-critically naive' (Ness, 2011: 25) and experiential world of Laban-practitioners (such as Davies, 2001; Maletic, 1987; Preston-Dunlop, 1998b) and the overly theoretical historians (such as Dörr, 2008; Karina and Kant, 2004). Instead of assuming a pure phenomenological attitude<sup>5</sup> I adhere to methods that enable and acknowledge the experience and participation of the researcher in the field of enquiry while recognising theoretical frameworks, such as reflexive ethnography and critical oral history.

### **3. Engaging with the Past: Methods and Critique**

#### **3.1 Oral History and Data Collection**

Responding to a personal interest in the identity of Laban practices in Brazil, I chose to start my investigation from the testimony of living Laban-practitioners in the country. This is because the local archive related to this practice is very sparse and the small number of existing publications result from the memory of the practitioners themselves (see Chapter Three section 3). I was particularly interested in meeting these artists and opening a space for them to express their thoughts and aspirations regarding their experiences with Laban praxis. As Perks and Thomson (2006: 1) highlight, oral history is about developing 'active human relationship[s]' and it was with such personal encounters in mind that I began the investigation.

According to the Oral History Association (OHA, 2009), the method can be understood as both a collection of oral testimonies, as well as the product of a process of historical research. Consequently, the method enabled me to value the individual experience and memory of local Laban-practitioners as well as draw an understanding of both past and present Laban-related practices in Brazil. Considering that oral history is a 'history of events, history of memory, and history and interpretation of events through memory' (Portelli, 2005: 5), my use of the method offered a 'realistic and fair reconstruction' (Thompson, 2006: 28) of these practices.

The use of oral memory to feed historical studies in dance is a common methodological tool for the discipline and has been widely employed in the development of dance studies scholarship (Boyd, and Roque Ramírez, 2012; Buckland, 1994; Kaepler, 2006; Kahlich, 2011; Tracy, 1997, among others). Layson and Lansdale (1994: 24) hold that the use of orality is well recognised in the writing of dance histories, particularly as the discipline gained scholarly importance. Alternatively, Mark Franko attributes this oral predominance with the nature of dance itself, as its tradition continues to 'conceive itself as primarily oral' (Franko, 2011: 328).

My use of oral history enabled me to trace the Brazilian local artists' biographies, (as Merrill and West, 2009 predict) including their individual training and acquaintance with Laban's discourse. To collect data (design and conduct the interviews), I followed the Brazilian Association of Oral History (CPDOC) guidelines (Alberti, 2005). I gathered and

traced the stories of more than thirty local practitioners scattered throughout the country to reveal a scenario of practices, including how Laban praxis travelled to Brazil and was received by local dance practitioners throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see Appendix 1 for the list of interviews held at this stage). Most of the interviews (conducted in 2008) ranged from thirty to sixty minutes. Some of the interviewees, however, spoke for up to two hours. Despite having the collection of oral history as the main purpose, I also distributed questionnaires (see Appendix 2) via email. This decision was taken due to lack of funding for travelling across the country to meet personally with all the artists. Also, all data gathered at this stage was in Portuguese.

A number of interviews were carried out at the artists' private homes, at times even sitting on their beds or the floor of their living room. Others were done in public cafés or their working studio. I have attempted to transform the embodied experience developed from the encounter with these lives into my overall argument of this thesis – valuing individual experience, generosity and complicity as materialisations of Laban's discourse (this is further discussed in section 4.2 of this chapter).

Both oral and written narratives revealed the interviewees' impetus to detail more or less of their personal practice. The longer interviews revealed interviewees' personal excitement in narrating their stories, which I interpreted as a demonstration of their passion and willingness to have their stories heard. But not all interviewees reacted in this way. Joanna Bornat (2007: 35) explains that this impetus or willingness to participate in the research is already predicted and grants the interviewee an active participation in the research. In this sense the oral sources function as co-creators. However, Portelli notes that the historian also has an important role in stimulating the interviewee. For Portelli historical sources would not exist 'without the presence, and stimulation, the active role of the historian in the field interview' (Portelli, 2005: 1). Hence, I tried to approach each practitioner with a welcoming and neutral expression to give space for them to speak. My smallest gestural responses of compliance with their narratives seemed to increase their availability to recollect experiences, pointing to more or less information shared. So, the

amount of material, the interviewees' willingness to participate and my own interview activity shaped the information I deliver from the practitioners throughout this thesis.

Due to the large amount of material collected and my difficulty in representing theirs and my experiences in written transcripts, instead of transcribing all the recordings, I chose to code the interviews straight from the audio, a method supported by both oral historians (Portelli, 2005) and ethnographers (Crichton and Childs, 2005). This way I could revise (and re-experience) the embodied channels of communication developed<sup>6</sup>, activating my own memory of each encounter. For example the tone in the voice of the interviewee when they spoke of exciting events or memories also led me to share their excitement for what they were talking about. Conversely, the pauses and omissions of information suggested insecurity on the side of the practitioners.

From the preliminary analysis of the narratives I selected specific points that stood out, such as how each participant came across Laban's discourse and their particular perspective on what the discourse is. For this analysis, I allowed myself to engage with the interviewees' personalities, as well as to perceive patterns emerging among their voices. The result of this grounded theory analysis (discussed in section 4.5 of this chapter) was an assembly of shorter narratives by each artist that were then combined to form a kind of dialogue among the practitioners (see Chapter Three section 6). Interestingly, despite the fact that none of the interviewees had ever met Laban himself, when asked about Laban they all articulated a strong opinion on his personality and character. The combination of their experiences builds a unique memory of Laban in Brazil as a generous person who advocated dance 'for all'.

Alongside the way I have chosen to present history starting from the oral memory of its agents, I felt the need to include a critical perspective to support my narrative in relation to the overall scholarship of Laban studies. Paul Thompson (2000: 3) clarifies that oral history is not necessarily an instrument of critique, as it depends on the 'spirit' in which it is used. Thus, I chose to include Foucault's scholarship to develop a critical approach on the dissemination and practices of Laban knowledge. I engaged with Foucault's writings to challenge the (Laban) histories and scholarship, which, up until now, have not



stretched their scope to consider the southern hemisphere as an active or even relevant source of Laban-practices.

### **3.2 Genealogy as a Critique**

I have relied on Foucault's history genealogy, in order to engage with the material collected and to develop an argument that presents a history of practice (Chapter One) and transmission of praxis into Brazil (Chapters Three and Four), as well as to discuss particular examples of Brazilian Laban praxis (Chapter Seven). Foucault's framework supports the manifestation of memory as traces and evidence of history. He argues that the investigation into practices and their discursive formation is served by diverse materials that include archival records and oral or written memory (Danaher, Schirato and Webb, 2000: 33). It was from this combination of the written and the verbal that I departed.

Seeking to challenge the traditional practices of history, Foucault developed his archaeological and genealogical methodologies to work together with his own historical investigations (Gutting, 1990).<sup>7</sup> Foucault's critical perspective has been widely used in dance studies' attempts to overcome the traditional historical enquiry of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Examples of this are found in the publications of Stefan Apostolou-Hölscher, 2014; Eva Aymami-Rene, 2015; Ramsay Burt, 2004; Kate Elswit, 2008, 2014; Helena Hammond, 2013; Heather Margaret Ritenburg, 2010. Following these scholars the concept of genealogy helped me develop a critical approach towards Laban's discourse and praxis beyond its Euro-American boundaries from a southern hemispheric (Brazilian) mind-set. Having voiced the experiences of the Laban community in Brazil (oral history), I introduced Foucault's genealogy to promote a 'particular version of history of the present, [that] undermines grand narratives of inevitable progress by tracing the origins of practices and institutions from a congeries of contingent "petty causes."' (Gutting, 2006: 14). Therefore, genealogy enables me to acknowledge the memories and experiences of living Brazilian practitioners as insights into the story that has been

previously told by a small number of Euro-American historians. In fact, this is the proposal of Foucault's genealogy lenses: to look into the past through the perspective of the people who are involved in the making of a particular context (Gutting, 2006: 12–13).

The accreditation of Foucault's theory as a methodology is controversial. Garland (2014:366) believes that there is no such thing as a 'Foucauldian theory'. This is, 'no ready-made theoretical system that can be "applied" by others' but a 'series of quite specific, precisely theorized analyses, each one mobilizing a customized methodology designed to address a theoretically defined problem from a strategic angle of inquiry' (*idem*). Nonetheless, a number of social and cultural studies scholars have identified genealogy as a reliable method for qualitative research (Gutting, G., 2006; Kendall and Wickham, 1999; O'Farrell, 2005; Saukko, 2003; Koopman, 2013).

As a method, Foucault's intellectual enterprise is related to developing a 'sensitivity to the particularities of historical events and structures' rather than focussing on 'fundamental views about knowledge and reality' (Gutting, 1990: 327). In these terms, genealogy aims at decentralising the voice of the historian and attempts to voice history from the practitioners' perspective. From this perspective I recognised in Foucault's history genealogy (1977) a possible framework to reveal Laban's footprint in today's materialisation of his praxis.

Foucault developed his history genealogy to propose an investigation of the past that recognises the influence of power structures while retracing the history of specific social communities and introducing a distinct perspective on historical research. The body thus becomes a site of negotiations of power (Schirato, Webb and Danaher, 2012: 39): 'the inscribed surface of the events' and a source of data for historical narratives (Foucault, 1977: 83).

Gutting (Gutting, 2006: 14) holds that Foucault's genealogy undermines the composition of 'grand narratives' in response to his desire to write histories of the present. Moreover, genealogy could be seen as a history specifically concerned with the complex and casual antecedents of a determined socio-intellectual reality, which Foucault regards

as an effort to question the need for dominant categories and procedures in history making (*idem*: 12-13).

Following Foucault's framework and aiming to investigate how certain taken-for-granted truths become historical constructs rooted in specific social and political agendas (Saukko, 2003: 115), I examine Laban praxis in Brazil, accounting for the experience of its local practitioners. From this I seek to recognise, but at the same time not limit myself to, the canon that has evolved in relation to Laban praxis in the main institutions and centres of Laban practice (concentrated between Europe and USA). My use of Foucault's genealogy encourages a challenge to the historical reality and truths that were previously set in regards to canons of Laban practice and the grand narratives of some of his main biographers. This is achieved by exposing their historicity, as done in Chapter One, and analysing the ways in which certain taken-for-granted stories build up what is understood as the 'Laban legacy' (Davies, 2001; Fowler, 2010; Hodgson and Preston-Dunlop, 1990; Lepczyk, 2009). Arguing against the legacy as a closed set of knowledge made available by a great historical Man, the genealogical perspective is used to reveal Laban's numerous collaborators as the necessary embodiment or materialisation of his thinking and theory. Similarly, throughout the third and fourth chapters I foreground the voices and the work of the Brazilian practitioners as embodied evidence and perhaps a more current or emerging practice (Chapter Seven) of Laban's discourse in the country.

To consider Laban's discourse under these lines opens up a space to think carefully about the praxis that conveys Laban's name. Through the lens of genealogy, Laban praxis could be acknowledged as a product of a collaboration of people in a continuous update. The term collaborator has been widely used to refer to the practitioners who were involved with Laban throughout his life. In fact, Maletic (1987:181) devotes a whole section of her book to the 'collaborators' who took part in the development of different branches of Laban praxis. The use of the term opens to consideration the purpose of the word legacy and even further the authorship of Laban's discourse. By sharing responsibility for the discourse, Laban's collaborators (and their practices) become immediately relevant for the understanding of the ways in which the discourse evolved and is practised nowadays

(see Chapter Four, section 3). When applying the same analytical principle to the practices of Laban's discourse in Brazil, I advocate the work of the local practitioners as materialisations of praxis in a transnational configuration (see Chapter Four, section 4).

Most importantly and following Foucault's (1977: 77) approach, I am not searching for the 'origins'. Rather I proceed with a collection and analysis of data that goes beyond the 'truths' that may be brought up by the origins (archive) or traditional history of Laban's legacy. In this way, I propose a parallel history that speaks of a local reality, nonetheless reflecting an overall condition of the field. As Foucault points out: 'what is found at the beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of the origin; it is the dissension of other things' (*Idem*: 97). These 'other things', such as the marginal practices that have not been institutionalised (as the work of the Brazilian practitioners discussed in Chapters Three, Four, Six and Seven), are of particular interest.

The overall reasoning for the use of Foucault's history genealogy framework therefore rests on the challenges posed by historical reality and the 'truths' which traditional history itself has been asserting (Saukko, 2003: 21). The use of the framework does not intend to complete a full genealogical argument on the history of the Laban discourse (as Foucault has done himself in his major monographs). Nonetheless, as I have elucidated, the methodology informs the range of this thesis suggesting that today Laban praxis exists through or from its contemporary perspectives, composing the discourse's current materiality. In this way, it fosters the exposure of the field's historicity, analysing the ways in which certain taken-for-granted truths build on what is understood as the 'Laban legacy' and suggests an inclusive perspective of the breadth of Laban's discourse.

#### **4. Engaging with the Present: Ethnography Practice**

#### 4.1 The Field

A large section of this research involved not only the investigation of active Laban practitioners but also my experience in the field of Laban movement studies addressed through ethnographic methodology. Ethnography is an established field in Anthropology and Social Science which has been thoroughly exercised and advocated in dance studies from the second half of the twentieth century, offering its methods as both a process and a product of research (Williams, 2004). Dance scholars Jane Desmond (2000: 45), Helen Thomas (2003: 81) and Deidre Sklar (1991) clarify that rather than developing textual analysis, ethnography requires the researcher to speak to people, participate in their activities and consider their own interpretations of what is going on.

Since the mid 1990's, dance ethnography has drawn particular attention to the researcher's body and how it 'approach[es] the area of study in a self-reflexive manner' (Thomas, 2003: 81). Sklar (1991) has been an important advocate (and widely referenced) of the use of the researcher's own kinaesthetic sense to research the other. She stresses that the specificity of doing ethnography within the dance medium is the focus on the body and its experiences, as opposed to the analysis of cultural objects. In fact, Adrienne Kaeppler (1999) agrees that social systems can be better explained through the engagement of the researcher in fieldwork practice, which provides an unique opportunity for real-time experiencing of facts, happenings and activities. Thomas (Thomas, 2003: 67) emphasises that ethnography within the dance discipline concerns an: 'in depth study of a culture, institution and context over a sustained period of time' employing a range of methods and techniques.

I established my field of enquiry in 2007 when I began to seek Laban practitioners in Brazil and to engage in participant-observation in the local community of Laban-practitioners. I explored Laban-related events, information and classes, aiming to experience the local scenario of Laban practices. This activity continued in Britain when I established myself in Guildford in 2010. My inclination to 'analyze and interpret the

perspectives and evaluative concerns' (Buckland, 2006: 9) of Laban practitioners, as well as participate in any kind of Laban-related events or workshops allowed me to experience a wide spectrum of Laban-related identities in a global sphere.

My aim to live through and along with the existing (global) community of Laban practitioners responded to a need to 'be there', which David (2013: 61) describes as a desire to embody the field in 'whatever way might be feasible'. From 2007 to 2010 I experienced the Laban-related teaching activities of Maria Mommensohn, Uxa Xavier, Juliana Moraes, Lenira Rengel, Joana Lopes, Ciane Fernandes, Marta Soares, Ellen Goldman, Bala Sarasvati and Tom Casciero. In England, I expanded the boundaries of my field, engaging with spaces where Laban had lived, tracing routes that Laban had traced, investigating local scholarship/archives (Laban Archive at Surrey and Trinity Laban), and participating in European Laban-events and practices, such as Laban Guild Annual Meetings in England (2011 through 2015), ICKL Conference (2011 in Hungary), and the Laban Event 2013 (Monte Verità, Switzerland), among other minor events. From November 2012 to January 2013 I returned to Brazil for a focussed field study of three selected artist-researchers (discussed in detail in Chapters Five, Six and Seven). These national and international connections contributed to the development of a combined insider and outsider perspective towards my field of study.

## **4.2 The Insider/Outsider Perspective**

The double position of an insider-outsider researcher in ethnographic practice has been a common standpoint in dance studies (Buckland, 2006:10). According to Desmond (2000:45):

Contemporary ethnographic writing and research is now much more attentive to the politics of representation of access, of "speaking for"

versus “speaking about”, and so on. No longer is “the field” always a place geographically far away from a researcher’s home.

The researcher’s turn to their ‘home’ matter and cultural manifestations is what Dena Davida (2011: xii) defines as an ‘insider ethnography’. First and foremost, my insider perspective of the field responds to my own Brazilian Laban-practitioner character that examines the work of local and fellow artists. In this sense I was culturally, theoretically and physically at home. Caroline Knowles (2000: 54) explains that the combination of a geographical and a theoretical perspective may also be predicted as a plan of action: ‘home and field invoke the duality of belonging and alienation, familiarity and investigation, which implicitly function as fieldwork strategies’.

Secondly, as a Brazilian researcher entering into a field that has been mainly led by Euro-American individuals and well-known Laban-related institutions, I gained an external perspective of the field’s agenda. Nevertheless, this condition also enforced my own marginalisation from the field. I suspect that this happened because I was not a well-known practitioner and did not hold an ‘official’ Laban diploma or active membership in one of the Laban-named institutions. Besides, this was not only a felt condition but also an enacted one. In this sense I was positioned as an outsider through a ‘social landscape’ (Knowles, 2000: 55) constructed by the senior practitioners I encountered during the research. In fact, Georgiana Gore (1999: 211) argues that the distance between the researcher and her field is a constructed gap, composed of cultural, geographical, subjective or epistemological distances. This means that the apparent (enforced or enacted) gap is not a physical barrier but exists only when it is enacted during encounters between practitioners of the field. For example, during the *Laban Event* (in 2013) and *Laban 2008* symposium I noticed that meetings were held where only selected people were invited. I was not among the invitees and neither were other established Laban-practitioners. In these two events I noticed a certain a politics of access to closed circles of LMA practitioners.

Hence, when I consider myself an outsider, responding to my exclusion from meetings and my ‘short’ experience with Laban praxis, this confirms a subjective

statement. Thus, there is actually no formal discussion in the field of who may, or not, be granted membership of the group<sup>8</sup>. On the other hand, over the years I have acquired a broad physical and theoretical understanding of Laban praxis (including a diploma in Choreological Studies), which allows me to understand the field as an insider-participant or member. Despite my epistemological insider Laban-practitioner perspective of the field, my enforced status as an outsider accentuated my double insider-outsider view of the Laban community.

Leila Lomba de Andrade confirms that the insider and outsider positions are relative conditions, whereby the researcher can move into or out of them in a constant flow (Andrade, 2000: 286–7), as I described above. In fact, Knowles (2000: 56) argues that a certain amount of reflexivity is needed in order to understand the relationship between the researcher's home and his or her field.<sup>9</sup> In this sense Charlotte Davies (2008) maintains that reflexivity comes to inform the methodology and assure the association of the researcher's experience with the information collected from the field. From this standpoint I became a 'resource' (Davies, 2008: 7) of my own field of enquiry.

My reflexivity and experience within the field has shaped my discursive accounts as 'participation-driven description[s]' (Ness, 2004: 131) of the field evidencing its dynamics and politics. The combination of my internal and external perspectives on the field of Laban studies has resourced and fostered the development of a particular analytical attitude towards Laban's discourse. This type of description and analysis involves the use of embodied practice methodologies (Ness, 2004) or participant observation methods described in the next section.

#### **4.3 Experiencing Laban Praxis through Participant Observation**

In my research I have acknowledged my experience as an essential element of the data generated. Davies (2008: 3) emphasises that 'all researchers are to some



degree connected to, or part of, the object of their research', maintaining the researcher's experience as a relevant part of the methodology which should be acknowledged in equal degree to the rest of the data. The method used to gather this experience within an ethnographic framework was the practice of participant observation, which involves a simultaneous combination of observation and engagement with the activities being observed (Flick, 2009: 233). This enabled the collection of a variety of different types of data ranging from written archival material to oral history/memory and bodily experience.

The significance of the experiential content gathered becomes evident in the way I articulate the data that emerged during the process, involving an awareness of my own self and my somatic understanding of Laban's discourse through workshops and my solo studio practice.<sup>10</sup> This allowed the ideas relevant to my project to 'circulate freely in the investigative space (actual or virtual)' (Nelson, 2013: 34). I also sought to challenge the information I collected or experienced in the field through experimenting either in the studio (attempting to recognise how my systematic practice of Choreutics and Eukinetics would lead me to agree or disagree with other scholars) or comparing them to existing literature on Laban. The practice I maintained throughout the research exercised a way of knowing and testing my own research activities. Because the score of this project was not a 'practice-based' enterprise (to have practice as a primary mode of sharing my research) it was not included in this methodology.

The use of my own embodiment of Laban praxis to understand the Other recurs in the field of dance ethnography. Works by Bull (1997), David (2013), Hahn (2007), Skinner, (2010), Ness (1992, 1996a), Novack (1990), Sklar (1991, 2000) and Srinivasan (2012) are valuable examples of the use of the researcher's kinaesthetic experience to understand specific movement/dance forms. To make sense of my experiences in the field of Laban studies required a long analytical process of determining motifs, selecting relevant contextual data from notes and interviews and a back and forth movement of 'induction and deduction' (Sklar, 1991: 7) through the data assembled. Also, not only

my impressions but also the know-how of the Other (Laban practitioners) was a relevant factor throughout.

Sally Ann Ness (1992: 16) proposes this mode of pursuing an ethnography as *performer oriented*, and it has been widely discussed and established in dance studies (Ness, 2004). The practice has been recently reviewed, scrutinised and reaffirmed as 'embodied ethnography' (David and Dankworth, 2014; Harrop and Njaradi, 2013: 7).<sup>11</sup> Despite the challenges that are posed by adopting this procedure and the risk of 'failure', Ness (1996a) and Bacon (2013: 127–128) maintain that it might provide a unique 'expansion of "knowledge"' and that scholars should therefore take the risk.

Taking the risk and developing a performer oriented or embodied ethnographical framework I followed Sklar's (1991: 7) procedure of evoking the 'experience of participation' in the way I came to understand the Laban field and individual practices within it. In this procedure, Sklar explains that the sensory, emotional and conceptual aspects of both the subject and researcher's experience interpenetrate each other at bodily level as well as in the writing. As I composed the narratives of Chapter Three (section 6) and Chapters Five and Six, I took into account my own understanding of Laban praxis, while negotiating debatable issues foregrounded by relevant discourse. When using the voices of the practitioners as source of history and practice I attempted to tell the difference between their genuine passion and their attempts to persuade me - as the practitioners knew I was investigating them and would generate literature about their lives and work.

Bacon (Bacon, 2006; 2013: 127) offers a similar phenomenological and somatic procedure to attend to and grasp the lived experience of the researcher and the Other. The procedure consists of 'being or a mindful noticing of felt experiences' (Bacon, 2013: 127) and voicing (or wording) the actions, sensations and experiences of both object and subject of research, awakening a real-time perception of self and others. Bacon advocates that as a methodology for the contemporary performer-ethnographer, this approach provides a 'frame through which agency and alterity can be embraced' (*idem*).

Embracing agency and alterity, my participation in the broad spectrum of activities of the field of Laban studies has enabled the maturing of a performer-oriented approach.

The somatic engagement and participation in the field investigated, where the body (of the researcher) is deployed as a tool for unpacking his or her enquiry is described as 'thick participation' (Samudra, 2008: 666). Through thick participation in Laban related workshops and activities I began to master Laban's discourse and was mesmerised by how my analytical capacities and ability to express my thoughts using my body in motion were enhanced. Through this understanding I was able to recognise the testimonies that described Laban and his praxis as 'genius' (Lacava, 2008; Loureiro, 2008; Pronsato, 2008; Rengel, 2008a). In this sense my experiences in relation to the field of Laban practices and the work of the Brazilian artists were in the first instance 'lived', rather than 'described'. This is because what I described of their experiences was frequently what I also experienced through my participation and practices<sup>12</sup>. This means that, as Emerson et al. (2011: 21) suggest, my participatory experience during the fieldwork influenced and shaped my thesis.

Considering my somatic and performer-oriented ethnography from a 'practitioner-researcher' perspective (Davida, 2011: 2; Hahn, 2007: 13) I recognise similarities with practice-based research enquiry. In fact Robin Nelson (2013: 12–3), who has written extensively about practice-as-research, has already pointed out such parallels. From an anthropological perspective, Andrée Grau (2007) notes that the practice of ethnography, more specifically the practice of the participant-observation method, could be considered as research based in practice. Grau highlights that 'learning to play, or enacting ethnography as a preparation for fieldwork, is about engaging in a physical not just a cognitive level' (2007: 4).

Perceiving my research as a type of practice I noticed the need to enhance my physical and cognitive understanding of Laban praxis. This is because 'knowing the structure of movement is not the same as experiencing the sensation of movement' (Samudra, 2008: 671). Samudra argues that the sensation of movement is only acquired after thorough training of an exercise/action, not only a single experience:

Even if one has had some slight training, one will not necessarily know what sensations or experiences the words piercing, shattering, explosive, and vibratory refer to or how to adjust one's technique to get those effects until one experiences them actively by trying different styles of hitting. (Samudra, 2008: 673)

My own training in a range of Laban-related practices has granted me the understanding that to 'know' Laban's discourse it is necessary to thoroughly engage in its practice (as noted by different Laban practitioners, see (Bradley, 2009)).<sup>13</sup> The practices I engaged with throughout my research (see Appendix 3) fostered my systematised understanding of Laban praxis, as well as the particularities of its different strands (as explained in Chapter One). While engaging with different strands of Laban praxis I noticed that the acquisition of a global understanding of the discourse is not trivial. In the course of my research I did not find practitioners or scholars who had experience of a variety of strands (and their particular politics) in the same way I developed. This experience allowed me to bodily (or somatically) understand not only the differences among the strands of Laban's discourse (embodied by the practitioners) but also the narratives (and rhetoric) I collected from them.

#### **4.4 Narrative Interview**

The use of narrative interviews aimed to collect subjective experiences and biographical information as well as personal opinion about the practitioners' work and the general field of Laban movement studies. Complementing my participant observation, the narrative interview method contributed to the development of the case studies in this thesis (Chapters Five, Six and Seven). The interview questions were generative and composed to stimulate the interviewees' narration regarding their life and work.

The use of this method promotes data collection for biographical research that intends to analyse individual lives. This was exactly the shift I made throughout the thesis: from the general (Laban studies field and its genealogy in Brazil) to the particular (work of outstanding individuals within the local community). Uwe Flick (2009: 180) explains that narrative interviews are used to source data that would not be generated by other forms of interviewing. This is because the narration grants the interviewee independence to reveal his or her story to the interviewer. Besides, as people 'know' themselves they are able to reveal more of their lives than what is offered in the theories of and about themselves (*idem*). The data collected provides knowledge that is not available in publications and archival data. Flick points out that the narrated reports can reveal life history experiences in the way they were lived by the subject, allowing them to speak and disclose information embedded in their lives and personal relationship with their work.

I developed the questions out of my research queries, aiming to generate narration and supply biographical information of the artist in relation to their practices (see Appendix 2 for sample of the basic questionnaire). The questions were based on my deep curiosity involving the ways in which people encountered Laban praxis and what drew them into adopting Laban's discourse within their own work. I sought to capture the voice of the practitioner regarding their life and work - artistic, research-led or pedagogical. I was also particularly interested in understanding their choices of career and how their 'Brazilianess'<sup>14</sup> may have influenced their pathways. Furthermore I wondered if they wished something had been different along their individual pathways. These topics fostered a collection of data that allowed me to gather their own intimate perspective of their practices.

Before each interview I adapted the initial questionnaire to embrace the particularities of each individual. Nonetheless, the structure of the questionnaire and the way I conducted the interview revealed pros and cons. The pros included the freedom granted to the practitioners to exhaust their thoughts and experiences in each and every question asked. The cons involved allowing them to answer the questions across a broad spectrum, which, at times, escaped what was at the heart of the initial question.

Nevertheless, I noticed that the way in which an interviewee moved away from my questions also revealed something about what she wanted to tell me. For example, when I asked one of the practitioners about the spectrum of her work she immediately began to describe her recent project. She did not give me information about her past activities or even minor activities she was engaged with in the present. Knowing about her other activities I reframed the question. However, she insisted on describing the same activity, not responding to the question asked. This revealed that the practitioner was interested in having specific aspects of her practice highlighted and refused to recollect others, knowing that whatever she said would influence the representation of her work in my research.

In sum, the three narrative interviews conducted took place between 2012 and 2013. I collected between one and three hours of digital audio recording from each of the three artists interviewed. I later transcribed and translated them myself (from Portuguese to English). Having collected the biographical data and field research experiences I initiated a process of grounded theory analysis.

#### **4.5 Grounded Theory Analysis**

Grounded theory is a well established qualitative method of data analysis which emerges from the material collected and not from hypothetical assumptions about the subjects and objects of study (Glaser and Strauss, 2012: 1). Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss explain that the method was developed in the 1960's and founded on pragmatism and interactionism as a way to guarantee credibility in qualitative research. It has been used across the field of dance studies where researchers collect and analyse qualitative data (Critien and Ollis, 2006; Fortin and Vanasse, 2012; Huxley, 2012; Wilson, 2009). I employed the method to raise enquiries from the data collected during the oral history, ethnographic research and narrative interviews. Silverman (2011) explains that the enquiries are built from a preliminary inductive theoretical study of the data gathered and

then it proceeds with its further assembling to support its analysis. From this premise, I assembled the data and developed a sampling and coding strategy to select the pertinent material out of the oral narratives, field notes and publications/archival materials.

First I gradually tracked and isolated the data that responded to my initial enquiries from both interviews and field notes. The (relevant) aspects selected included the practices of the artists, their background and their transgression and/or progression from the borders originally set by Laban's discourse. Secondly, I noticed novel patterns emerging from the comparison and contrast of the data from my own analysis and from the practitioners' testimonies. Finally, I organised the coded material in topics to compile and compose narratives and case studies across the thesis. Throughout this process, my own experience guided the connections and disparities among the data.

The use of grounded theory to operate Laban praxis was a consistent choice. This is because, as Carol-Lynne Moore (2009) concluded while investigating Laban's Choreutics theory, Laban himself built his discourse from grounded theory methodology. Moore (2014a, 2014b) called it a 'grounded theory of human movement' where 'Laban's delineation of elements of body dynamics and relationships among these elements are the explanatory substance of his grounded theory'. According to Moore, Laban observed movements and their manifestation and followed with a conceptualisation in a 'reversed engineered hypothesis' (*idem*). The fact that Laban himself operated within a grounded theory framework reinforced the use of the method to investigate Laban praxis.

### **Conclusion: Oral History, Ethnography and Experience**

The broad methodological framework of this research combines history and ethnography in order to investigate the past and present of the field of Laban movement studies. As Joanna Bornat (2007: 34) advises, the boundaries between history, ethnography and other methodologies are ever narrower.

When I propose to develop an oral history together with a genealogy of Laban practices in Brazil, I am alluding to Diana Taylor's (2006) idea of producing data rather than examining existing ones (collecting narratives from living practitioners - repertoire - rather than examining what is already existent in the archive). This is because I realised that Laban praxis is stored and transmitted through bodily practices. Furthermore the existing scholarship related to Laban praxis in Brazil and its history is scarce, while there are no sources available in relation to transnational movement of Laban praxis, except for the work of Hwang (2013). Thus, my research offers a fresh genealogical and ethnographic perspective not only of Laban praxis in Brazil but also of a transnational movement and subjectivation (following Foucault's term, which is developed in Chapter Seven) of Laban praxis in general.

The particular use of Foucault's critique and genealogy offers the possibility to accept the testimonies of local practitioners as traces of the history and contemporaneity of Laban praxis in a local sphere. The voice and work of the artists became the material for understanding the transnational transmission and development of praxis in a diverse cultural realm. With this particular perspective of the local scene, the practitioners become the agents of the history produced.

The narrowing of the investigation from the overall picture of Laban praxis in Brazil to the work of three local artists shifted the methodology to draw on ethnographical enquiry. I observed, participated and shared the practice of the selected artists to analyse not only the product of their work but also their experiences as active practitioners in the field. Moreover, my own involvement and understanding of that experience has been influential. Throughout the research I engaged in a number of activities to develop my kinaesthetic understanding of Laban's discourse. These ranged from attending year-long courses and short workshops, to participating in Laban-related conferences, symposia and meetings. This enabled me to discuss the practices of the Other Laban-practitioners as well as locate them in a wider field of Laban movement studies.

My participant observation in the field was directly related to dwelling in Brazil and in England, which has clearly configured the scope of my experiences. This enabled me



to scrutinise the outreach of the practices worldwide and in Brazil. From this standpoint I turn to investigate the transmigrational nuances of how Laban praxis was introduced in Brazil and how this reflects the global field of Laban studies which is primarily rooted in Europe, the UK and USA.

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#### Notes to Chapter Two:

<sup>1</sup> I noticed during my fieldwork in Laban-related events in England, especially during informal conversations with practitioners such as Walli Mayers, Anna Carlisle, Vivien Bridson, Eden Davies, Samuel and Susy Thornton that most of the older generation of artists who studied at the Laban Art of Movement Studio experienced either Laban or Laban and Ullmann or only Ullmann's teaching.

<sup>2</sup> Bridson's classes are based on Laban principles informed by her contact with Kurt Jooss, Mary Wigman, Hanya Holm, Jean Cebron and Jane Dudley (Bridson, n.d.).

<sup>3</sup> As a stable and organised group, ICKL promotes Laban's notation system and demonstrates openness in exchanging knowledge with the diversity of Laban-related practitioners. The ICKL community gathers twice a year and invites Laban-related artists and researchers to share their practices and knowledge with the community. I have myself been invited to attend the event twice, in 2011 and 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Preston-Dunlop herself explains how she only came to understand certain principles of Laban's discourse through the practice of his dance theatre pieces (Preston-Dunlop, 2013b: 36). I have experienced this concept and method with Preston-Dunlop's collaborator Alison Curtis-Jones, who has been delivering workshops that demonstrate and allow the participants to experience their (Preston-Dunlop and Curtis-Jones) 'practical historiography' procedures. Their practice and concept resonates with my own need to put in practice and embody Laban's discourse in order to materialise and understand it.

<sup>5</sup> Ness (2004: 139–140) considers that embodied and culturally focussed dance research is entailing phenomenology in a 'larger, more complex epistemological project' than its pure philosophical propose. In this way the descriptions generated through embodied practice would go beyond phenomenological sensing to reinscribe and internalise 'new modes of judgment into the researcher's being as a result of embodied practice'.

<sup>6</sup> The oral historian and choreographer Jeff Friedman's (2011: 291) believes that oral interviews articulate 'embodied channels of communication' constructing 'layers of meaning' between interviewer and interviewee. I comply with Friedman's thoughts as it was through my contact with the practitioners that I was able to share their enthusiasm for Laban's discourse.

<sup>7</sup> Examples of Foucault's historical investigations can be found in his main monographs - *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), *Madness and Civilisation* (1964), *Discipline and Punish* (1975), *The history of Sexuality* (1976).

<sup>8</sup> Informally, however, I have always experienced discussions over the inclusion or exclusion of practitioners within the field. One possibility of looking at the inclusion or exclusion of practitioners from the community could be the certificate or diploma in a strand of Laban practices. Preston-Dunlop (1998) recalls that while Laban was still alive there were a number of discussions involving the 'Laban diploma' courses and activities. Preston-Dunlop (*idem*: 110) flags that Laban introduced a 'diploma' to his praxis when considering the legal and financial consequences of the dissemination of his work out of his reach. I consider that this diploma could have been the beginning of a segregation attitude towards the practitioners in the field.

<sup>9</sup> Charlotte Davies (2008) explains that reflexivity is a phenomenon that occurs in social research which associates the private - involving the researcher's individual accounts of what she sees and experiences - and the public - the information collected of the Other's environment. This association

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expresses the researcher's 'awareness of their necessary connection to the research situation and hence their effects upon it.'(Davies, 2008:7), evidencing the researcher as a resource.

<sup>10</sup> Throughout the research I have been engaged in individual studio sessions to physically (somatically) engage with Laban's movement principles. This practice has integrated my reflexive articulation of information from the field; however, it is not further examined in this thesis. The survey of my experiences during the research is located in Appendix 3.

<sup>11</sup> Harrop and Njardi (2013: 1) believe that what is currently taken as embodied ethnography is a practice of anthropological research that emerged from two sources: folklore studies and Turner and Schechner's performance studies practice which privileges process and practice over product. However, there have been other trajectories traced in the field which hail from dance studies such as the scholarship of Brenda Farnell and Deidre Sklar.

<sup>12</sup> In contrast with the somatic and lived description is the purely descriptive encounter with the subjects of research. This idea comes from Clifford Geertz's (1973) theory of 'thick description', which is related to a semiotic perspective of culture.

<sup>13</sup> The production of 'body knowledge' through movement practice has already been thoroughly discussed by the dance philosophers Fraleigh (1996), Sheets-Johnstone (1980, 2011), Parviainen (2002) among others. To support the acquisition of tacit knowledge, Nelson (2013) explains that there is a knowing that involves a procedural knowledge - a know-how, which is not related to the 'know-that' of a discursive knowing.

<sup>14</sup> I used the concept of Brazilianess to illustrate my query related to their sense of nationality in relation their personal histories. I questioned the practitioners if they thought that their Brazilian nationality influenced their thoughts and practices related to Laban's discourse. I chose not to restrict their answer to the question and left it to them to seek possible influences or not of their nationality in the development of their practices.

### **Chapter Three: Genealogy of Laban Praxis in Brazil**

The history of Laban praxis in Brazil consists of approximately eighty years of migration and displacement of artists who embodied Laban praxis and disseminated it through their individual practices. This history dates back to the first half of the twentieth century when modern dance artists moved in and out of the country building the foundation of Laban's discourse at a local level. Hence, Laban's European praxis was crucial for establishing the grounds for modern dance in Brazil during the first half of the twentieth century.

In Brazil, dance history is not a popular topic. The historian Maria Claudia Guimarães (1998: 139) assesses the lack of publications on local dance history, revealing that the ones available resemble information guides and not historical studies. Likewise, in her survey of Brazilian dance historiography scholarship, Carmi Ferreira da Silva (2012: 22) notes that local dance history writings were 'left out of history itself'. According to Silva, the few existing publications favour either the history of classical ballet or local popular and folkloric dances. Silva insists that Brazilian dance history seems to be 'written in its own "resource" of expression, the Brazilian body' (2012: 22).

Despite Silva's critique of the local scholarship of dance history, she reveals, almost as an aside, an important factor in the matter of dance practice in Brazil - the inscription of history in the body of local practitioners. The body as a resource for storing and transmitting information is particularly important in the history of Laban praxis both generally and more specifically in Brazil, as it was transmitted from one generation to the next through the teachings of a master to his disciples. To grasp this resource I embarked on an oral history investigation, which was crucial to collect the voices of the practitioners as testimonies of experience and bodily-inscribed practice.

The arrival of Laban's praxis in Brazil involves a continuous timespan which began in the early 1930's and which continues to evolve in the twenty first century. Laban praxis first emerged embedded in the artistic activities of Brazilian and European artists who

chose Brazil as their home country, opening their own studios and dance courses. The pioneer artists embodying Laban praxis began the modern dance movement in São Paulo, which eventually dispersed throughout the Brazilian territory, introducing modern dance practice in the cities of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro. Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, clusters of modern dance emerged in other states and cities, widening the scope of Laban practices in the country.

The experiences and voices of the local practitioners were my main interest. To create a historical perspective of how the field of Laban praxis was established in Brazil and how practitioners perceive their work related to Laban's discourse, I created a narrative, gathering testimonies and highlighting the most prominent issues raised. Through the combination of a chronological overview of Laban praxis arrived in Brazil and the experiences of the local practitioners I draw a portrait of Laban's discourse in the country.

## **1. Establishing Grounds – Brazil in Context**

As the largest country in the Southern American continent, Brazil is a Lusophone federal republic with a population of 191 million people (IBGE, 2011), spread through 26 states, combined into five geographical regions: North, North East, Central West, South East and South. Indian tribes inhabited the land until it became a colony of Portugal in 1500. In 1889 Brazil acquired independence and began its own industrial development. Until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the country was mainly a terrain of resources for the European market.

Brazil's independence and industrialisation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century fostered the arrival of theatrical dance in the country. Therefore, Brazil was included in the touring of European and Russian ballet companies (Faro, 1988). While touring in Brazil, the artists developed interest in immigrating and establishing their own dance schools in the

emergent territory. Most of the documented histories have been of classical ballet, which got established with the first school of ballet in Brazil in 1927 in Rio de Janeiro - Brazil's federal capital at the time (Pereira, 2003).

Modern dance, however, has received very little attention in terms of research until today. Despite its traces in Brazil dating back to the early 1930's (as I demonstrate), it has not been the subject of publications.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless it was briefly mentioned in the books of the Brazilian dance historians Antônio José Faro (1988) and Eduardo Sucena (1988) who make reference to only two dancers: Chinita Ullman (Sucena, 1988) and Yanka Rudzka (Faro, 1988)<sup>2</sup>. Faro (1988:52) argues that the lineage of modern dance artists has its roots back in Laban and Wigman and was introduced in the country by the two Laban-trained artists mentioned above (Navas and Dias, 1992; Sucena, 1988). Having Laban praxis as the foundation of modern dance in Brazil grants a specific character to the unfolding of the local dance history.

Apart from these artists, no account is given of dancers that arrived in Brazil in the second half of the twentieth century. Overall I can argue that the Brazilian dance and especially modern dance history is terribly sparse. Nevertheless, and because my research is not of a historiographical character, I used the published sources available to trace how, when and where Laban praxis arrived and evolved in the country.

## **2. General Picture of Laban Praxis in Brazil**

Laban praxis in Brazil was initially represented by scattered individuals from the first and second generations of Laban practitioners who either acquired the knowledge with Laban or with Laban's direct collaborators. These were mainly immigrants who travelled from Europe to Brazil in the first half of the twentieth century (Amadei, 2006). Yet, the local scene counted not only on immigrant artists who established permanent

residency in the country but also on artists who remained temporarily in the country or visited just for a season or two (Faro, 1988).

Laban praxis first arrived in Brazil during the 1930's through Wigman's *Ausdruckstanz*. This was followed by a first generation of practitioners coming from Dartington Hall (in Devon in the UK) where they studied with Jooss and Laban in the 1940's. In the 1950's and 1960's the immigration of the first, second and third generation of *Ausdruckstanz*, Art of Movement and Dance Theatre dancers took place. Each of the arriving artists began to develop a local cohort of Laban-influenced students. These also demonstrated interest in travelling abroad to train in the schools where their masters had come from. This growing local interest increased the flux of modern dance and Laban praxis into and throughout Brazil. This in-and-out dynamic is still evolving in the early twenty-first century, where local artists aspiring to reach systematic training of Laban praxis travel to Europe or the USA. Through this aspiration and travelling, second, third and fourth generations of Laban practitioners merge together. This continuous movement is constantly (re)shaping the national scape of Laban related practices.

As an artist-researcher myself I am a product of this dynamic. I began as a third generation Brazilian Laban practitioner of the English Art of Movement heritage, as a result of three years of tuition (from 2003 to 2005) with Joana Lopes, a pupil of Maria Duschenes (former apprentice of Jooss and Laban in England). Then I aggregated a fourth generation from the Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) strand, working together with Ciane Fernandes (from 2007 to 2009) who studied in the Laban Institute in New York founded by Irmgard Bartenieff, a pupil of Laban in Germany. In 2014, I became a member of the second generation of institutional transmission of Laban praxis when awarded a Specialist Diploma in Choreological Studies (from 2011 to 2014 at Trinity Laban in London) under Valerie Preston-Dunlop, Rosemary Brandt, Alison Curtis-Jones and Melanie Clarke's tuition. My own example reflects the combination of influences that Brazilian practitioners gather in their education. It demonstrates the mobility of the heritage and generations of practice and transmission of Laban praxis. This diversity of

strands and heritages of practice I have acquired configure a unique repertoire of Laban praxis which foregrounds my particular perspective developed in this research.

### **3. The Sources**

#### **3.1 Sources to Locate Laban Practitioners**

The use of local (Brazilian) sources was essential to locate the practitioners working with Laban practices in Brazil. Throughout the research I combined primary (oral) and secondary (historiography) sources with orality, operating as the scaffolding of the research. Hammergren stresses the need for local - national or regional - sources offering 'possibilities for new interpretations or complementary analysis' (2004: 21), as dance history is directly related to the interpretation inherent in the secondary sources (Koritz, 1995: 31). In fact, Hammergren (2004) articulates that the choices researchers make over their sources reflect directly on the type of narrative they create.

First I had to identify local practitioners. The information on the network of people working with Laban praxis in Brazil was, in the first instance, gathered from local publications of books, papers and programmes of Laban related events from the 1990's and 2000's. These events were the *Encontro Laban* of 1989, 1996 and 1999 in São Paulo; the *Laban 2002* and *Laban 2008* conferences held in Rio de Janeiro; and the conference proceedings of the International Council of Kinetography Laban (ICKL) 2006 and 2008. As for printed sources, the edited collection by Maria Mommensohn and Paulo Petrella (2006) offered valuable information on people in Brazil working with Laban practices including memories and discussions of local practitioners somehow related to Laban praxis.

I have also drawn on video-documentary sources produced by Brazilian artists. These include the video documentary by (Roizenblit and Boguea, 2006a); and the documentary by Mommenson and Roizenblit (2002). In addition, word-of-mouth was also

a source of information. For example, during the oral history interviews I conducted, often the interviewee would mention their colleagues and fellow practitioners. However despite gathering a large amount of references of artists involved with Laban praxis in Brazil I was not able to contact every name that appeared in the sources investigated due to lack of contact details for some of them and evidence of their practices. Nevertheless the acknowledgement of a large number of people involved with Laban's discourse informed me of the range of the field in the country.

After the initial survey of the artists who inaugurated the field of Laban practices in Brazil, I investigated each one of them further, either through oral history or theoretical research. In this research I used two types of oral sources identified by Layson and Lansdale (1994: 24): oral tradition, passed from one generation to another; and oral telling, which is the result of recollection of past memory. My use of oral sources was concerned with first-hand accounts of events and lived experiences, recognised by Layson and Lansdale as 'sources of potentially great importance to the dance historian' (Lansdale, and Layson, 1994: 24). My use of orality as a major source aims to avoid the development of a logocentric representation that happens when the researcher positions her or himself as the other. This condition can occur when the history is produced by an insider (Lansdale, and Layson, 1994: 71), which is indeed my case. In order to avoid the loss of details which can occur in oral memory sources, I also drew on contextual materials. With the combination of oral and written sources I attempt to reduce the gaps present in the use of individual memory.

### **3.2 Contextual Sources**

The publications that (briefly) cite the modernist dance artists in Brazil are: Sucena (1988); Faro (1988); and Navas and Dias (1992). From these authors, Navas and Dias (1992) were the only ones who included interviews and rigorous referencing. Sucena



(1988) only referenced quotes while Faro (1988) does not make any reference to his sources.

Each modern dance pioneer is discussed in individual sources. Chinita Ullman's life and work appear in the research of Marcia Bozon (1995, 2003) and Claudia Guimarães (1998). To retrieve information about Maria Duschenes the interviews published in (Navas and Dias, 1992), Mommensohn and Roizenblit (2002) and (Roizenblit and Boguea, 2006a) were imperative. Also, I interviewed a number of Duschenes's former students myself (see Appendix 1), including three of her long time pupils - Lenira Rengel, Maria Mommensohn and Acacio Valim.

Information on Yanka Rudzka's life and work was sourced through the research of Guimarães (1998). Complementary information was retrieved from the interviews I held with Rudzka's former pupils, who drew my attention to her involvement in the *Ausdruckstanz* tradition (Amadei, 2008; Robatto, 2008). In regards to Rene Gumiel's influences in modern and contemporary dance in Brazil, the video-documentary of (Roizenblit and Boguea, 2005) and her interview published in Navas and Dias (1992) were essential. As to Rolf Gelewski, the website of his institution Casa Sri Aurobindo (CASA Sri Aurobindo, 2014) provided both audio-visual and written information of his life and work. Likewise, the short papers published by the Brazilian scholars Veras (2008) and Passos (2010) were useful.

It is important to note that despite the fair amount of sources retrieved, there is an inherent problem of source criticism among the material available. The lack of referencing is recurrent in most of the publications listed above, meaning that I was not able to follow up on their historical accounts. As this thesis is not a specific historiographical work on the pioneers of modern dance in Brazil, I chose not to side-track with a historical investigation and critique of sources of each individual that contributed to the foundation of Laban praxis in the country. So, despite my use of information and citations of these sources I restricted myself to general facts about the practitioners' lives and work in order to deliver information on the genealogy of Laban praxis in Brazil.

#### **4. The Pioneers: Chinita Ullman, Maria Duschenes, Renée Gumiel, Yanka Rudzka and Rolf Gelewsky**

The South East region, and more specifically the city of São Paulo was the port of arrival of the first artists who introduced Laban praxis in Brazil, in contrast to Rio de Janeiro's classical ballet scene (Sucena, 1988). Until the end of the nineteenth century São Paulo was still a small town of 40,000 citizens (compared with 11 million in 2011)<sup>3</sup>. It was in the first half of the twentieth century (while Laban was still alive and shaping his praxis) that modern dance and Laban's praxis settled in Brazil. As the entrance door for most of the modern dancers into the country, São Paulo became home to Chinita Ullman (from 1932), Maria Duschenes (from 1940), Yanka Rudzka (from 1953) and Renee Gumiel (from 1957).

Amadei (2006) reveals that the first person known to bring the German heritage of expressionist dance practice to Brazil (Laban - Mary Wigman heritage) was the Brazilian dancer Frieda Ullman (Porto Alegre/ Brazil 1904-1977), also known as Chinita Ullman. Sucena (1988: 346) describes how Ullman left Brazil in 1919 to study arts in Germany. Bozon (1995) adds that she left with the intention of studying piano. However, she ended up enrolling in Wigman's studio in Dresden (Germany) and later joining her dance company activities from 1925 to 1927 (1995: 60). From 1927 to 1932, Ullman continued her career performing throughout Europe sharing the stage with the Italian dancer Carletto Thieben, and receiving positive reviews from critics of the time (Bozon, 1995; Sucena, 1988).<sup>4</sup>

Ullman returned to Brazil in 1932 as part of a tour with the dancer Kitty Bodenhein. However, neither of them ever returned to Europe due to preliminary tensions of the Second World War (Guimaraes, 1998: 15), and perhaps by virtue of Ullman's Jewish background. Re-establishing her career in the city of São Paulo, Ullman promptly set up a dance studio together with Bodenhein called *Academia de Bailado* as perhaps the first

modern dance school in the city and in the country (Bozon, 1995: 61). Bozon adds that they offered a syllabus similar to what Hanya Holm offered at the Wigman School in New York, aiming at:

...establishing a systematic culture of the body through the harmonic development of its functions and of its aesthetic education... done through preliminary physical exercises, movement expression studies, improvisation, composition and musical-rhythmic studies. (1995:62)

Following Wigman's *Ausdruckstanz* tradition Ullman believed that dancing aimed to express the 'states of the soul' translating 'life into movement' (*idem*, 1995: 60). Ullman initiated a modern dance programme in 1939 in the Municipal Ballet Academy of São Paulo as well as taught *Ausdruckstanz* principles in the first academic theatre course established at the University of São Paulo in 1948<sup>5</sup>.

As a key figure in the Brazilian modern art movement Ullman strongly influenced the art aesthetics in the country in the first half of the twentieth century (Sucena, 1988: 347). Ullman's own words express her enthusiasm towards the emerging Brazilian modern art movement: 'and what matters is to take forward the work of implementing the theatrical dance in our land' (Ullman in Sucena, 1988: 346). Over her twenty years of activity in São Paulo, Ullman performed and choreographed extensively. Sucena (*idem*, 1988: 346) remembers that Ullman retired in 1954, closing her career with a farewell performance.

While Ullman was introducing modern dance practice in São Paulo, the city opened its doors to the European dancer Maria Ranschburg. Maria Ranschburg [Duschenes](Budapest 1922 – Brazil 2014) was born in Hungary and immigrated to Brazil in 1940 at the age of eighteen. After engaging in Dalcroze training in Hungary, the young Jewish<sup>6</sup> dancer went to England in 1938 to complete her dance training in Jooss's school in Dartington Hall. As the school was shut down in 1940 (due to war tensions) she fled from England to Brazil (following her parents who had already immigrated to the country).

Arriving in Brazil, Duschenes remembers that she was 'dancing all the time' (Duschenes in Navas and Dias, 1992: 32). She initiated her teaching career through an invitation from the Mackenzie school<sup>7</sup> to teach dance to the children. Then, as the parents saw Duschenes's work, they also requested classes for themselves, and requests from the teachers followed. From that moment on she never stopped teaching (Duschenes in Navas and Dias, 1992).

Yolanda Amadei was among the eight people who took part in Duschenes's initial Art of Movement classes. In the early 1940's Amadei remembers that right from the start Duschenes 'had a very difficult situation to overcome... she had poliomyelitis' (Amadei, 2008). It was in 1944 at the age of 22 that she contracted the disease. Due to this health issue, her career totally shifted from a dance performer to that of an Art of Movement educator. The result was that she was often secluded, teaching in her own home studio designed by her husband (the architect Herbert Duschenes) specifically for her dance teaching. It was through word of mouth that her dance classes became popular.

Despite her health conditions Duschenes became widely known and trained many generations of artists, teachers and researchers who were enthusiastic about modern dance style and Laban's Art of Movement. Duschenes's pupils (Arruda, 2008; Lacava, 2008; Rengel, 2008a) disclosed that they followed Duschenes' activities for more than twenty years. Her students all developed an intimate relationship with their master, whom they all called "Dona Maria"<sup>8</sup>. Most of the facts and information in the testimonies given by her apprentices are recurrent, amassing a large number of memories of their teacher. They all call to mind her generosity, her cleverness, her sensibility in recognising each student's individual capacities, her dance choir activities, her health issues and positive attitude: 'the student would see himself through her eyes' (Roizenblit and Boguea, 2006b). Her pupils remember that Duschenes directed each of her students to pursue the activity that she noticed they were more acquainted with. In this way she acted as a facilitator, or perhaps as a true master, bringing to life and surrogating<sup>9</sup> Laban's own charisma.

Duschenes took advantage of her overseas medical treatments to update her dance knowledge. According to her students (Solange Arruda, Cybele Cavalcanti and

Yolanda Amadei), these trips enhanced her cultural experiences and enabled her to take back to Brazil some of what was happening in dance at the time in Europe and the United States. For example, Duschenes travelled to England to enrol on courses at the former Laban Centre (Duschenes in Navas and Dias, 1992). Her apprentices remember that she regularly took part in the Connecticut College American Dance Festival, and visited the schools of the modern and postmodern dancers and choreographers Martha Graham, Jose Limon, Doris Humphrey, Merce Cunningham (in the USA) and Kurt Jooss (in Europe). She also encouraged her students to “see the world out there” and to look for workshops abroad (Arruda, 2008; Cavalcanti, 2008). Her pupils remember that she always made it clear that in her classes she used not only Laban’s Art of Movement but also the combination of other practices she had acquired throughout the years. Amadei’s memories confirm Duschenes’s charisma and diverse knowledge:

She treated the students with a lot of kindness. When someone had a difficulty she would not insist. She looked at other possibilities, without showing that he was making mistakes or that he was having difficulty, attempting to surround the student with other techniques, other exercises so he could do what he before was not able to do (Amadei, 2007: 40).

Duschenes was invited to write the preface to the Brazilian version of Laban’s *Mastery of Movement* (Laban, 1978). As a member of the Dance Notation Bureau (DNB) in New York, she was authorised by the Laban Art of Movement Centre (UK) to give Laban-certificates to her pupils.<sup>10</sup> Under her signature are the words ‘Representative of the Expressionist Modern Dance or Art of Movement’. Duschenes was frequently invited by the municipal council to lead educational courses, workshops and free of charge dance activities. Examples of these were the dance programmes that took place in the public libraries of the city of São Paulo in the late 1970’s, 1980’s and 1990’s (Roizenblit and Boguea, 2006a: 21). It was through these projects that Maria Duschenes led Cybele Cavalcanti, Uxa Xavier, Solange Arruda, Lenira Rengel and Renata Macedo Soares, for example, to engage in educational dance. These efforts demonstrate the popularity that Duschenes achieved within the dance and arts community of São Paulo and in the

country, evidencing the transmission of her Laban-related know-how from one person to another.

Duschenes also choreographed a number of dances, as Cordeiro (2008) remembers. Some of these were theatrical performances and others were dance choirs. However, Duschenes is not well known for her choreographic activity and related documentation is mostly inaccessible.

Having played a key role in the 'thinking process of dance and theatre professionals' of Brazil (Mommensohn, 2013), Duschenes retired in 1999 due to the advancement of Alzheimer's disease, and she died in 2014. Given the half century of her activities in the country, it is difficult to estimate the number of people who were influenced by her teaching activities. Mommensohn (2013) suggests a metaphor to explain the influence of Duschenes' work upon the dance circle in São Paulo: Duschenes was like 'a stone falling in the water' creating waves that reverberate and spread movement throughout the medium.

More than a decade after Duschenes' arrival in Brazil, São Paulo received an *Ausdruckstanz* choreographer who stayed in Brazil for ten years. The Polish dancer Juana Zandel de Rudzka also known as Yanka Rudzka (Warsaw 1916 - ?) arrived in Brazil in 1952, after five years of exile in Argentina (Guimaraes, 1998: 14). Rudzka came from an *Ausdruckstanz* tradition, having taken lessons in Poland with former pupils of Mary Wigman - Ruth Abramowitsch (or Ruth Sorel), Georg Groke and Harald Kreutzberg - whom she met during her exile in Switzerland escaping the Second World War.

When Rudzka arrived in São Paulo she also began to take classes with Duschenes. She was invited to launch the first Brazilian Higher Education (HE) dance course in the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) in 1957. Thus she became responsible for taking both modern dance and Laban's Art of Movement to the North East region of Brazil (Robatto, 2008). In 1959, Rudzka returned to São Paulo where she continued to choreograph and teach modern dance classes to the local performing arts community. She joined the staff of the acting school *Escola de Artes Dramáticas* - EAD (where Ullman had previously

taught). Furthermore, Rudzka was repeatedly invited to give workshops to actors/theatre companies in different states of Brazil, including the state of Paraná (city of Curitiba), Goiás (city of Brasília) and Bahia (city of Salvador) (Guimaraes, 1998: 146).

Paradoxically Rudzka attempted to distance herself from the expressionist dance canon of her teachers Wigman and Kreutzberg, as she was seeking 'simplicity and concentration rather than uncommitted exterior. I want more of pure forms' (Rudzka in Guimarães, 1998:151). Yet, despite the urge to withhold the expressionist canon, her voice suggests a subjectivity characteristic of Wigman's *Ausdruckstanz*. Rudzka left the country to return to Europe in 1965. Guimarães believes that Rudzka established herself in Graz (Austria). There is no published information about her subsequent whereabouts and practice.

In the late 1950's, São Paulo welcomed the French dancer Renée Gumiel (Saint-Claude 1913 - São Paulo 2006). Gumiel was a member of the first class of Jooss's school in Dartington Hall. In the interview given to the dance historian Cassia Navas, Gumiel explains that an important part of her development as a performing artist came from her activities at Dartington Hall training with Jooss and Leeder; with the Russian theatre directors Alexandre Tairov and Michael Chekhov; with the modern dancer Ted Shawn from the United States; and the Indian dancer Rudi Shankar (Gumiel in Navas and Dias, 1992). As part of Jooss's dance company, in 1936 she performed one of the main roles in *The Green Table*: 'the woman wearing the red costume' (Navas and Dias, 1992: 30). In addition, Gumiel held that her training made her realise that 'dance and theatre have always been the same thing', leading her to label her work as a 'theatre of the body' (*idem*: 31).

After her training in Dartington Hall, Gumiel took a six-week choreography course with Laban in Germany just before he fled to France (Gumiel in Navas and Dias: 30). She also remembers having had classes with Harald Kreutzberg before immigrating to Brazil. Overall, Gumiel described herself as a modern dancer and included her dancing in the 'modern dance' heritage. She believes that she was the first person to introduce dance

theatre in Brazil in 1961 (Gumiel in Navas and Dias: 36). Gumiel remained as an active dancer and actress until her death in 2006.

Still in 1960 the German dancer Rolf Gelewski (Berlin 1930-1988) immigrated to Brazil to replace Rudzka in the dance course of the UFBA. His arrival reinforced Laban's *Ausdruckstanz* heritage in both the syllabi of the course and in the North East region of Brazil. Gelewski had received his dance training from Mary Wigman and Marianne Vogelsang in Germany. He abandoned a dancing and teaching career at the Metropolitan Theatre in Berlin to immigrate to Brazil (Passos, 2010; Veras, 2008). In the late 1960's, he travelled to India where he encountered the spiritual community of *Sri Aurobindo Ashram*. The trip impacted on Gelewski's work, resulting in the development, in 1971, of the CASA Sri Aurobindo, an institution that housed his embodied philosophy (still active in the city of Salvador). Gelewski developed a unique style, combining *Ausdruckstanz* tradition with Hindu spirituality and practices. He remained in the dance course of UFBA until 1975 when he died prematurely in a car accident (CASA Sri Aurobindo, 2012). He left written manuals of his practices in the headquarters of the Casa Sri Aurobindo institution, to which there is no public access (notes from informal conversation with Karin Veras in 2008).

When Gelewski arrived at the dance school of UFBA, Juana de Laban (Laban's daughter) was visiting the University's theatre school in the same year. De Laban was a dance scholar living in the United States and came to Brazil funded by a Fulbright lectureship grant to tour the Southern American continent (De Laban, n.d.). Her visit was mentioned during a personal conversation with Raimundo Matos Leão, who also registered the visit (Leão, n.d.). De Laban's visit to Salvador may have contributed to source Laban praxis in the region, as suggested by Leão.

To conclude, these artists were the main references of Laban's Art of Movement, Dance Theatre and *Ausdruckstanz* during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Brazil. Not only did they transport Laban praxis to Brazil embedded in their activities, but also brought alongside it a master-disciple heritage of European modern dance, which changed the scenario of theatrical dance in the country.



## **5. Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century: the Multiplication of Laban Praxis**

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the pattern of arrival of Laban practitioners in Brazil was notably modified. The flux of people willing to travel abroad to acquire specialist knowledge increased drastically and the immigration of Laban-trained artists decreased. The master-disciple pattern of transmission of knowledge that was demonstrated through the practices of the pioneer artists also shifted towards an institution-based education. I observed that the increase of the popularity of dance as a discipline in academia led to a rise in the number of dance-related courses offered around the country by state, federal and private universities, which I believe triggered the possibility of funding for artists' education and specialisation abroad. For example, there was a drastic increase in governmental funding for artists to travel to Europe and USA and acquire Laban-related diplomas<sup>11</sup> (as discussed below). This enabled the shift from studio-based training to academic-art learning.

While in the 1970's São Paulo was multiplying Art of Movement practices through the work of Duschenes, Gumiel and their students, Eva Schul was retuning to Brazil from her training with Irmgard Bartenieff and Hanya Holm. The Italian immigrant Eva Schul left the southern region of Brazil and went to the USA, where she spent seven years between Holm's studio and Bartenieff's classes. Schul had immigrated as a child to Brazil from an Italian refugee camp in 1956 (Schul, 2008a). Schul recounts how she began her career as a ballet dancer but rapidly abandoned it as she felt that the style did not allow her expression to emerge. She only 'discovered modern dance' later on at the first National Dance Conference which took place in the city of Curitiba (Schul, 2008a). As a matter of fact, Rudzka also performed in this congress, and Schul may have been influenced by her dancing even though she does not mention it. Seeking other experiences with modern dance, Schul went to Uruguay where she had her first embodiment of Laban's praxis

through the work of the Uruguayan dancer Hebe Rosa which, according to Fontán was a former student of Sigurd Leeder in Chile (Fontán, n.d.).

Back in Brazil in 1975, Schul met Alvin Nikolais (a former pupil of Hanya Holm), who advised her to travel to New York. Following Nikolais' advice Schul met Holm while experiencing other modern dance techniques including Laban praxis with Bartenieff (Schul, 2008b). Despite this period of living and working in the USA, Schul maintained her dance company in Brazil, which she would visit periodically. As the opportunities for work increased in Brazil she gradually established herself back in the country but never lost her connection with Holm and the Laban Institute in NY (Schul, 2008b).

With her extensive theatrical productions and teaching, Schul powered the expressionist dance aesthetic and Laban praxis in the southern region of Brazil. Her words reveal her integration of the knowledge she acquired abroad into her own practice:

I see now that, despite the strong influence from Hanya and Nik, both technical and choreographic, I slowly went on adapting to the Brazilian speed, the *gingado*<sup>12</sup>, the way of moving and - more deeply - the culture. My work is completely distinct from the American... I made my dance become ever more south/Brazilian and ever more mine. (Schul, 2008b).

Meanwhile, returning to the southeast region Regina Miranda was introducing the city of Rio de Janeiro to Laban praxis. The Brazilian Regina Miranda (Rio de Janeiro 1948 - ) started her theatrical career in Rio de Janeiro with a diversity of dance and theatre trainings. She left Rio de Janeiro in the mid 1970's and went to New York to study dance in the Joffrey Ballet. During this period she met Irmgard Bartenieff and enrolled in the DNB's specialist course in Laban movement studies (Miranda, 2008a). Returning to Brazil in 1977, Miranda first settled in the city of Brasilia (Federal District, Central-West region) but rapidly moved back to Rio de Janeiro (South-East region).

As well as influencing diverse spheres in the cultural politics of Rio de Janeiro, Miranda also reveals a history of freelance teaching Laban praxis in HE institutions. Having collaborated with *Angel Vianna* dance college in Rio de Janeiro since the late

1970's, in 2012 she officially launched a postgraduate course in LMA at the institution. Miranda instructed a number of artists who later also became references of Laban praxis in Rio de Janeiro, such as Adriana Bonfatti, Marina Salomon, Marina Martins, Ana Bevilaqua and Angela Loureiro. Later, most of these artists were led by Miranda to acquire an institutional certification in LMA at LIMS in New York. This may have occurred due to the fact that Miranda maintains a strong connection with the LIMS institution. In fact, she has been part of its executive committee, assuming different responsibilities and chairing board positions. These international and institutional duties granted Miranda a specific status and responsibility as a representative of Laban praxis in Rio de Janeiro. She makes this evident during her interviews, classes and talks (as I have experienced in her oral presentations in diverse national and international events).<sup>13</sup>

When Miranda arrived in Rio de Janeiro the city of São Paulo received Laban's former collaborator Lisa Ullmann, who was invited for the launch of the Brazilian translation of Laban's book *Mastery of Movement* in 1978. According to Solange Arruda (2008) and Janice Vieira (in Roizenblit and Boguea, 2006b), Ullmann also gave a two-week course in the city. Video footage of this course appears in Mommensohn and Roizenblitz's documentary (2002).

From the 1980's a change in the heritage of artist/studio and master-disciple began to shift the status of Laban praxis in Brazil. This decade saw the emergence of people who had not acquired their knowledge through artist/studio and master-disciple lineage, but who had gained it from institutionalised HE courses.<sup>14</sup>

In my opinion, this is a reflection of the global development of academic research in Dance (Giersdorf, 2009) and the development of postgraduate degrees in the field. The growth of this type of education is characteristic of this period<sup>15</sup>, where graduate courses in the arts were being launched in Brazil and performing arts academics began to be recognised (professionally) in the arts field. According to the records of the Brazilian Government *National Organisation for Higher Education Development* (CAPES, n.d.), the first six performing arts-related (not considering music) postgraduate courses were launched in the 1990's. By the 2000's the number of courses had doubled. It is most likely

that the increase in the number of performing arts postgraduate programmes ensured a need for further investment in training personnel to teach on the emerging courses.

It seems likely that the accreditation of Laban praxis as a knowledge (through scholarship and grants awarded by the national scientific funding bodies) influenced the configuration of the transmission of Laban praxis in the country. The evidence for this is the change in the way that the artists (and now scholars) acquired knowledge in Laban praxis. The stories from the Laban practitioners who trained in the 1980's included not only their memory, performances and teaching, but also theses and dissertations that discuss Laban praxis in dance and education. This changed the local history of Laban praxis, which was no longer solely transmitted through master-student relationship and personal archives but began to include academic written documents.

Maristela Lima provides an example of this shift. She was sponsored to acquire knowledge in dance, education and Laban praxis through a Doctorate at Temple University, USA. Lima returned to Brazil in 1983 and was responsible for importing Laban praxis to the State of Minas Gerais, in the South-East region of the country through HE teaching. In fact, Lima recalls that she had already been introduced to Laban praxis by Duschenes before she decided to expand her knowledge through a PhD. Having been employed as a teacher of dance in a physical education course, Lima had Laban praxis as part of her syllabi. In 2001 Lima was part of the foundation of the Dance undergraduate course at the Federal University of Viçosa (UFV), where she continues to lecture Laban-related courses.

In the same decade Monica Allende Serra, a Chilean born dancer, settled in São Paulo following her political exile in the USA. Serra was introduced to Laban praxis in Chile, while she was a student at the University of Chile, where Laban's former pupil Sigurd Leeder taught her. She recalls having visited the Laban Centre and collaborated with Marion North (Laban's former pupil) in dance and psychology research. Serra became a lecturer on the dance course of the University of Campinas (UNICAMP), where she included Laban praxis in her courses when associating psychology and dance<sup>16</sup>

(Serra, 2008). Serra was responsible for supervising Masters and PhD theses including Lenira Rengel (discussed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven).

In this same period, the dancer Lenora Lobo (Lobo, 2008), after being introduced to Laban praxis by Duschenes, went to the Laban Centre in London where she was awarded a Masters degree in Laban Studies. Back in Brazil in 1982, Lobo established herself in the Central-West region of the country, influencing the dissemination of Laban praxis in the region. In 1986 she founded her own company (which is still active) continuing to disseminate Laban praxis to many of her dancers and students. Lobo has also contributed to the Brazilian literature of dance-making/choreographic practice with two books published on her compositional methods (Lobo and Navas, 2003, 2008), which I recognise strong influence from Preston-Dunlop's (1980b) Choreological perspective.

From the 1990's an even larger wave of people began to seek training in Laban-related institutions abroad. These people returned to Brazil with specialist diplomas/certificates, Masters or PhDs in Laban-related topics such as educational dance, Dance Movement Therapy, Choreological Studies, Laban Movement Analysis and Labanotation. A sample of this geography involves the following artists/scholars: in the South-East region Andrea Jabour, Denise Telles-Hofstra, Marina Martins and Telma Gama established themselves in Rio de Janeiro; Isabel Marques, Juliana Moraes, Mariangela Melcher, Marília de Andrade and Marta Soares, Renata Macedo Soares became established in São Paulo; Cibeles Sastre, Flávia Valle, Julio Mota and Marisa Napoline went back to the South region; and Ciane Fernandes based herself in the North-East region. Arriving back from their training abroad all of these artists established themselves as lecturers in Brazilian universities.

As the movement of artists seeking training abroad intensified, so did the local circulation of Laban's discourse. Throughout the decades the city and state of São Paulo housed the emergence of many Laban-related professionals who were pupils of Duschenes. This contributed to the composition of a wide group of people who learned from Duschenes and further advocated the praxis. Among them are Acacio Valim, Analívia Cordeiro, Cilô Lacava, Cybele Cavalcanti, Lenira Rengel, Maria Mommensohn,

Renata Macedo Soares, Solange Arruda, Yolanda Amadei, Adalberto da Palma, Joana Lopes, Lia Robatto, Rogério Migliorini, and Uxa Xavier.

Interestingly two of these artist-scholars introduced Laban's discourse into the São Paulo state educational syllabus. Isabel Marques participated in the development of the accreditation of dance as part of the discipline of arts education in public schools (Marques, 2008). Lenira Rengel further assumed the task of developing workbooks for these dance classes, prioritising Laban's discourse as scaffolding to the teaching of dance in schools (Rengel, 1991, 2006, 2007a).

From the beginning of my research in 2007 I have observed that the interest in Laban praxis is still growing. The Laban 2008 conference held in Rio de Janeiro brought together more than 200 Laban-practitioners (national and international) to share research and practice involving Laban-praxis. Also, every year I observe the increase in the number of Brazilian practitioners who are somehow related to Laban praxis, offering workshops and courses around the country.

## **6. A profile of Laban in Brazil: Voicing Local Practice**

After giving an overview of the movement of Laban praxis into Brazil and its growth across the country, I gathered the voices of the practitioners interviewed to trace what Laban (and his praxis) represents in (and to) Brazil. I operated in a reflective manner, where the voices of interviewees uncovered my own 'grounds for speaking' (Thomas, 1993: 76) about them. Working within similar framework, dance sociologist Helen Thomas (1993) supports this style of investigation. This is because the testimonies I collected shaped my own subjectivity of the image that Brazilian practitioners make of Laban's persona and his discourse. It is particularly interesting to observe how the artists express an opinion of Laban without ever having met him. Despite the diversity of training backgrounds amongst these practitioners and the fact that some of them have never

interacted with each other, they seem to have developed similar experiences with Laban's discourse. This evidences a development of a particular, as well as collective, memory of Laban that comes from their interaction with their tutors and the available literature. Combining these voices, I crafted a narrative to express these experiences.<sup>17</sup>

It was a common statement among the practitioners who actually admitted Laban's insights and mysticism, that Laban praxis has changed their lives. It was the diverse applications of the discourse that most attracted them. For example, the theatre director and scholar Marisa Naspoline observes that 'there are a myriad of possibilities' of associating Laban praxis in performing arts craft. The choreographer and researcher Analívia Cordeiro supports this thought by affirming that the possibility of using Laban's theories in different practices is already inherent in the discourse itself. She remarks, however, that to achieve this, thorough practice it is necessary to engage in systematic training of Laban's movement principles.

The plurality of such practices and outcomes suggests that Laban praxis offers practitioners a chance to develop 'what' they want to say and 'how' (Marques, 2008). The pedagogue and choreographer Isabel Marques explains the way in which Laban praxis transformed her work:

As a choreographer I cannot think of choreography without the elements of language. As a director, I glance at a work and I already know something is funny... I can detect what I want in relation to weight, space... it's a scientific precision (Marques, 2008).

In this sense the choreographers Lenora Lobo, Analívia Cordeiro, Marisa Naspoline and Isabel Marques all share the view that Laban developed a movement language which underpins communication through human movement, whether functional or expressive.

This array of possibilities seems to come from a perceived universality of Laban's discourse. The pedagogue and researcher Lenira Rengel feels that 'Laban found specific and ample terminologies for each one of us to express ourselves'. The pedagogue Uxa Xavier agrees, proposing that Laban praxis is not only knowledge but also 'a powerful tool

that is out there'. The pedagogue Renata Macedo Soares and the choreographer Lia Robatto concur 'Laban as a tool grants a rich vocabulary to the artist' (Robatto, 2008). But Lacava points out that among all the possibilities offered by the discourse, each person needs to organise their own way of applying the knowledge to their lives and work.

With a similar concern, the pedagogue Uxa Xavier identifies that despite the need for thorough practice, it is important not to be 'messianic' about it. Xavier's perspective highlights the autonomy of artists in relation to Laban praxis. Furthermore, Lacava defines Laban praxis as an 'authorial' practice, meaning that each practitioner becomes an author of his or her Laban-related work. Martins feels that each artist that interprets Laban's discourse opens up a 'new door' and she believes that this is exactly what Laban had in mind. Rengel confirms this when she states that '[Laban] said that he had the keys but did not have the doors, that it was up to the people to progress with his material'.

Placing these thoughts into practice, the pedagogue Cybele Cavalcanti, who has been teaching dance for children for over forty years, believes that Laban praxis should be adapted to its place and time (culture) in order to be a valid resource. She gives an example: 'it is not possible to consider that which was being done in England in the 1950's as a bible. It has nothing to do with the reality of children today' (Cavalcanti, 2008). During her career Cavalcanti has developed her own method of teaching dance to children based on Laban praxis (Cordeiro, Cavalcanti and Homburger, 1998). In this way, the choreographer Marta Soares (2008a) finds that the Laban's discourse was made available to the world and is 'out there' to be brought into play.

The practitioners mostly felt that when they embodied Laban praxis it became part of their own 'genetics' (Jabour, 2008). The Choreographer Andrea Jabour gives the example of how, from the moment she was introduced to the praxis through Preston-Dunlop's classes, her work began to be influenced by the discourse. Loureiro, however, clarifies that when she refers to Laban praxis she does not intend to refer to Laban's persona but the entire field composed by Laban and his collaborators. The scholars Julio Mota and Maristela Lima share this position while remembering the participation of Laban's collaborators in the consolidation of the discourse.



Laban praxis had a personal impact differently in each practitioner. The actor and scholar Ligia Tourinho recognises that she uses Laban praxis because it feeds into her work: 'it mobilises me to create and work'. Conversely the scholar Laura Pronsato at first rejected the discourse. However, her experience with Laban's movement principles changed her mind: 'I rapidly entered more and more in the [Laban] field and noticed how rich this experience is... it is an experience that allows infinite associations' (Pronsato, 2008), discovering the importance of the knowledge to the development of her own expression.

The practitioners note the interdisciplinary possibilities of Laban praxis. Marina Martins quoted a number of disciplines that she believes interact with Laban praxis: visual arts, cinema, anthropology, mathematics, geometry, physics and music. Cordeiro considers that this interdisciplinary attribute 'opens up possibilities as an attitude of work and production. He [Laban] suggests establishing contact with the world, with other areas of production, with other techniques' (Cordeiro, 2008). In her opinion it is not conflicting to be a 'Labanist' and a specialist in other areas. In fact the choreographers and scholars Regina Miranda, Angela Loureiro and Joana Lopes see Laban's movement principles as the coalescence of different fields. Furthermore, Lopes advocates that 'Laban's theories were related to principles that are scientific. It develops an awareness that allows technological renovations, creating methodologies for dance teaching, both materially and historically' (Lopes, 2008).

Laban's discourses' inherent interdisciplinary 'bear fruits' as the Scholar Marisa Naspoline (2008) asserts. A similar metaphor is used by Lacava who compares Laban praxis to a diamond: 'Laban sees the rough diamond coming out of the earth and his System of Movement analysis is the polishing of the diamond - the person and its movement' (Lacava, 2008). At the same time, the pedagogue Adriana Zenaide believes that finding our own diamond is not enough as 'it is necessary to know what we will do with it'. Operating within this metaphor, Zenaide composed a poem with a combination of Laban praxis terminologies and her own experience with a group of impoverished children with whom she works on a regular basis:

I see that the Mobius Strip helps us build the dialogue among the malnourished bodies, constructed from a sensing-physiological-sweat-juice transformed into flower for the ones that allow themselves to dance-Love. Dance to celebrate Life, a life which consciousness is based on Fraternal Love. This is the largest Challenge, a Kinesphere to be launched out into a more honest Planetary Life. New Territory to be re-connected, where the Angel-Factors come in. Active Weight to welcome the other; strong active to eliminate from our hearts the selfishness; decelerated to listen to our internal rhythm, lacking silence; accelerated to save the environment and our terrestrial-life connection. (Zenaide, 2008)

The use of the diamond as a metaphor of Laban praxis reveals the mesmerising state that emerges when the discourse is placed in practice. Lenira Rengel agrees that the possibilities it offers are 'amazing'. In addition, the scholar Marina Martins associates this scope of possibilities to the openness that characterises the discourse: 'there are several entry doors and several links... where the combinations [among them] are infinite and never wear out'. The choreographer Lia Robatto supports this thought. Yet Maristela Lima believes that the universality and openness of the discourse was Laban's own choice, which she acknowledges as 'very intelligent'.

These perspectives suggest that the Brazilian practitioners discovered in Laban's discourse an access point to 'many creative possibilities' (Lima, 2008). Yet Robatto advises that this may cause misunderstandings in the use and application of Laban's discourse. As an example, Robatto mentioned the pitfall of using Laban praxis as a 'recipe'. Soares adds that:

[Laban practice] is not a cake recipe that you use and copy and it works and is always the same cake... on the contrary, it allows each person to be independent to work in their own way with groups and in different circumstances (Soares, 2008b).

The practitioners' awareness of the possibilities and scope of Laban praxis exposes a collective characteristic of their individual experiences. Despite the particular background of each artist, their experiences share a certain essence that is inherent in Laban's discourse and that is revealed through the combination of their voices.

The use of metaphors and even poetry to describe a personal relationship with Laban praxis was a common practice to all interviewees who disclosed their creativity and life-engagement with Laban's discourse. It gives a glance of how Laban praxis has merged their lives and work together. Their individual shaping of Laban praxis to attend to their needs evidenced both the inherent properties of the discourse and the practitioners' own ability to adapt the know-how to their particular needs.

### **Conclusion: General Picture of Laban Praxis in Brazil**

Laban praxis has been a resource for Brazilian artists and scholars since the 1930's. The chronology of the influx of Laban praxis into Brazil proposes a historical perspective of the ways in which Laban's discourse was transported into the country and was embedded in the practice of local practitioners, influencing the consolidation of modern dance nationally.

The combination of chronological and geographical data consolidates time and space in the background and current picture of Laban praxis in Brazil, demonstrating the travelling of the discourse into the country. As discussed, from the 1930's until the 1970's the people representing the praxis in the country were few and scattered. Nonetheless the local practices remained as a stable activity of modern dance dissemination as each artist had their own studio where they continued to disseminate Laban's movement principles. It was only from the 1980's onwards that the international flux of Laban trained artists increased, becoming popular throughout the country's territory. With this shift,

Laban's discourse gained accessibility in different states. A relevant factor in this boost was the increase in funding possibilities, which fostered access to Laban praxis abroad.

Laban praxis was disseminated throughout the country through the work of individual practitioners (and not institutions). From a preliminary nucleus of modern dance artists concentrated in the city of São Paulo (South East region), Laban praxis reached Salvador (North East) and finally Rio de Janeiro (South East), Curitiba (South region) and Minas Gerais (South East). Despite the substantial number of artists in São Paulo in the first half of the twentieth century (with Ullman, Duschenes, Gumiel, Rudzka and their loyal students), the rest of the country did not share the emerging style.

Interestingly, different from the history of classical ballet in Brazil, Laban praxis, through modern dance activities, found in the city of São Paulo a fertile ground for its development. As described in this chapter, the teaching activity of Laban practitioners and modern dance artists who immigrated to the country fostered the continuous outreach of the local network of practices. Although teaching might not have been the sole activity that transmitted practical knowledge, in my investigation it revealed itself as the most prominent one. As the artists claimed, teaching and studio-based practices were responsible for extending and multiplying the lineages of descent of Laban-related activities in Brazil.

Despite the importance of the training that a number of artists received abroad, it is important to highlight the fact that the artists and scholars in activity in Brazil have also been responsible for the dissemination of the discourse inland. Perhaps the greatest exponent of modern dance and of Laban praxis in the country was Maria Duschenes, who had an active career of sixty years.

It is also important to point out that in no way do the people I have cited here exhaust the number of active Laban-practitioners in Brazil. The artists and scholars mentioned are the people who somehow collaborated with my research, either because they shared their experiences through interviews or because they are referenced in local publications. Having ceased the collection of data, I am aware that the traffic of people inland and

across the borders continues to occur, as Brazilians seek the training and accreditation that is given by international institutions and certification courses. However, I was not able to cover all emerging practitioners that have been featuring in the field.

If we imagine the collection of artists and educators who disseminated, taught and passed on Laban's discourse to a number of other people, we can start to weave a large fabric of people who were somewhat influenced by Laban praxis. In this way we can begin to elucidate the possible scope of the practice and circulation of Laban's discourse in Brazil. From the practitioners and practices highlighted in this chapter I now turn to examine specific types of practice that influence the dissemination of Laban praxis and consequently influence the memory held of Laban's discourse in a local sphere.

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#### Notes to Chapter Three:

<sup>1</sup> I use the term 'modern dance' as it is the terminology used by Laban trained artists such as Gumiel (Gumiel in Navas and Dias, 1992), Duschenes (Duschenes in Navas and Dias, 1992) as well as local historians who wrote on the initial developments of dance in the country as Guimarães (1998), Navas and Dias (1992), Bozon (1995); Faro (1988) and Sucena (1988). For these authors 'modern dance' became a reference to attribute to the style practiced and disseminated by the artists who arrived in Brazil embodying Laban praxis.

<sup>2</sup> Mattos (1991: 30) has pointed out that there might be a bias in the information of Sucena and Faro as they both come from a specific context of dance in the country and lack information of other geographical regions. This suggests that the actual history of dance practices in Brazil has not yet been scrutinised.

<sup>3</sup> It was only from the industrialisation boom that happened from the 1920's (after the First World War) that São Paulo's economic development and population rapidly expanded. In the end of the 20th century São Paulo became one of the largest and most populated cities in the world (Biblioteca Virtual, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> According to Bozon (1995), these reviews are housed in the archive available at the *Arquivo Multimeios* (Arquivo Multimeios, 2013) in São Paulo. However, I did not get a chance to verify this information myself.

<sup>5</sup> Information about the first theatre course at the EAD (Drama Arts School) established in São Paulo see (Tavares, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Maria Ranschburg is also mentioned as one of the Jewish artists who immigrated to the American continent (Falbel and Falbel, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> The Mackenzie school is a traditional school in São Paulo. It was open and is still considered a Presbyterian (Protestants) leading school.

<sup>8</sup> 'Dona' is a common and colloquial title used in Brazil which can be placed ahead of the first name to address a woman. It is also used to address female teachers.

<sup>9</sup> My use of the term surrogate comes from the Performance Studies scholar Joseph Roach (1996) and is further discussed in the context of Laban praxis along Chapter Four.

<sup>10</sup> Solange Arruda presented her certification during interview in February 2008. Under Duschenes' signature it stated 'Representative of Rudolf Laban Art of Movement'.

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<sup>11</sup> The majority of Brazilian artists interviewed confirmed that they were only able to travel abroad to acquire a training in Laban praxis due to governmental scholarships. These artists were: Cibelesastre, Ciane Fernandes, Denise Telles-Hofstra, Juliana Moraes, Julio Mota, Maristela Lima and Marisa Napoline. I consider that if the government granted scholarships for these artists to acquire Laban-related diplomas, it is most likely that Laban praxis was accepted by the educational authorities as an important know-how for the country's community of artists and academics.

<sup>12</sup> *Gingado* is a Brazilian-Portuguese term that comes from the Brazilian martial arts practice of *Capoeira*. It is a common expression used in other instances apart from *Capoeira* itself. It refers to a three dimensional sinuous movement that is done involving the whole body, describing a motion similar to the act of 'dribbling': in the sense of both retreating to avoid a stroke, and at the same time seeking a gap to reach the other and apply a stroke.

<sup>13</sup> On several occasions during the course of my research I have been asked (when I reveal I am from Brazil and I research Laban) about Regina Miranda. Seldom have I been asked about any other Laban practitioner that I mention in this chapter. This alerted me to the international recognition that she has.

<sup>14</sup> Although the first HE dance syllabus in Brazil was introduced in 1957 in the UFBA, it was only from the 1980's that BA dance courses began to flourish. In 1984 the PUC-PR (which later became part of the FAP) launched a dance BA in the southern region of Brazil (FAP, 2014). In 1986 UNICAMP launched its dance BA in the Southeast region.

<sup>15</sup> In the UK the situation is similar. According to Brinson (1991: 87) despite the fact that dance has existed for many years in HE physical education syllabus, and has been accepted as research topic, it only acquired an independent course status in 1981 with the launch of the Dance BA at the University of Surrey (Dance And Research: An Interdisciplinary Approach, 1991: 3).

<sup>16</sup> Serra was later substituted by Elizabeth Zimmerman who also has a Laban studies background. As one of my lecturers during my undergraduate at UNICAMP (from 2001 to 2004), Zimmerman introduced Laban's movement and modern educational dance principles during her classes for the course of Psychology and Dance.

<sup>17</sup> The voices I am referring to are related to the oral history interviews I have detailed earlier in this chapter and Chapter Two. For a complete list and reference of the interviewees see Appendix 1.

## **Chapter Four: Transmission and Migration of Laban Praxis - Brazil in Context**

The previous chapter framed a Brazilian perspective of Laban praxis, its arrival and on-going expansion in Brazil, leading to the development of the modern dance movement in the country in the twentieth century. To examine the transmission and appropriation of the discourse by the Brazilian practitioners, it is necessary first to draw an understanding of the overall transmission of Laban praxis and then consider the specificity of the local scenario. Despite the large number of international publications on the discourse, its transmission has been an under-explored terrain, little discussed by either scholars or practitioners.

Similar to other dance styles, Laban initiated a framework of teaching and transmission of praxis that involved studio-based (movement) activities in private studios or institutions that offered Laban-related training (Dörr, 2008). In addition, Laban published articles and books alongside lecture-demonstrations of his praxis<sup>1</sup>, which suggests other mediums where his discourse was being disseminated. These different processes continued after his death with Laban's collaborators or pupils passing on their knowledge (Laban praxis) to their students. Through this pattern, the transmission of the discourse becomes directly related to the way Laban and later on specific practitioners or institutions address Laban praxis and its different strands of practice. Thus, this understanding also illuminates the genealogy of Laban praxis in Brazil.

As mentioned in the Introduction of the thesis, the specificity of Laban praxis as a technique of the body differentiates it from other dance studies that investigate the migration of dance forms (such as classical Indian and ballet and modern dance). This is because Laban's discourse needs to be considered as a non-stylised training (practice) and not a stylised product (form). In addition, the lack of discussions on the transmission of Laban praxis (as exclusively a movement training and analysis and not a form) creates the need to identify its functions before and after Laban's death. This nature of the

dissemination of Laban praxis is also a void in the current – international and Brazilian – scholarship.

Addressing issues related to the materiality of the different strands of Laban praxis (such as educational, therapeutic, performative, analytical, and etc.) and the heritages of Laban practitioners, this chapter aims to discuss the consolidation of the different traditions of practice and how they influenced the establishment of Laban's discourse in Brazil. The materialisation and transmission of Laban's discourse is directly related to the type of work and teaching that the individuals develop. To unpack this claim, first I demonstrate how individual practices that originated in Laban's discourse carry a specific memory of Laban praxis. Then, drawing on the performance studies theory of Joseph Roach (1996) and Diana Taylor (2003) I analyse how these memories are transferred in genealogies of practices that build identities (strands) of Laban discourse. I show that Laban praxis was disseminated and endorsed through the work of individual artists who operate in different fields (such as education, dance performance, movement analysis, notation etc.). Also, through Taylor's theory of archive and repertoire I propose that the transmission of Laban praxis involves the combination of practices with the publications available in the field. Finally, from the recognition of these identities, I consider the type of memory or 'practices of memory' (Roach, 1996) of Laban praxis that were transported and multiplied in Brazil and perhaps even worldwide.

The discussion presented in this chapter comes from my practitioner's perspective of Laban's discourse. This means that my embodied understanding of different strands of Laban practices guides me to consider how they connect back to Laban's original discourse or, in other words, how Laban praxis manifests in each strand. These manifestations or practices of memory invite the possibility of recognising the subjectivities (of the practitioners) that shape Laban's discourse as it is transferred through generations of practitioners.



## 1. Euro-American Heritages of Laban-Practice

In the first chapter (section 5) I introduced the different generations of practice and the strands of Laban-practice emerging out of each one. I discussed how the emerging strands of practice, which developed out of Laban's discourse, are accepted by the Laban-community as representations of Laban praxis.<sup>2</sup> In dance studies, Linda Tomko (2004: 80) holds that the methodological perspective that traces the influences of the teacher to his/her students is a modernist pattern of representation. Kant (2004a: 108) adds that in these cases that the concept of time acts as a defining category. My use of this modernist pattern (as in Chapter One and Three) served as an initial analytical model, fostering an understanding of the people involved in the transmission of praxis and their proximity (generation or time wise) to Laban himself.

When considering the history of European modern dance, Michael Huxley (1994: 162) suggests that the initial genealogical sketch is only a starting point for the understanding of the transmission of practice through the generations of practitioners. Huxley explains that in Rudolf Laban's specific case, the tracing of a genealogical lineage is thus a delicate endeavour. This is because the reverberation of Laban's legacy reveals a number of people who have acknowledged influence from Laban after experiences ranging from long-term apprenticeship to brief encounters with his praxis.

Attending to Huxley (1994), I not only develop a sense of the distribution of generations of practitioners for each strand of Laban praxis, but I also face the variety of strands of Laban's discourse to understand how their practices influence the memory of Laban praxis as a whole. By this I mean that the different types of practice that are involved in Laban praxis, such as choreographic, educational, professional training/specialisation, therapeutic or analytical, transmit Laban's discourse in different forms and styles. Thus they all carry, from body to body and from one generation to the next, certain aspects of Laban's discourse holding its memory and principles. Nevertheless, these types of practice may be characteristic of more than one strand of Laban-practice. For example,

the transmission of knowledge via choreographic practice happened in the heritages of the *Ausdruckstanz*, Dance Theatre and even Choreological Studies strands. On the other hand therapeutic practice occurs in the heritages of DMT, KMP and AM. These practices demonstrate a direct influence on the transmission of Laban praxis, as I will discuss.

Transmission of dance practice is broadly accepted as the flow of information that is passed on from teacher to student (Hahn, 2007: 2). Tomie Hahn clarifies that her definition involves the history of transmission systems (such as oral, voiced and movement practice traditions) embracing the process of teaching and learning. Along similar lines, the different strands of Laban-practice gather clusters of practitioners who relate to each other through their teachers (masters) and the types of practice or product of their respective activity. For example, *Ausdruckstanz*, Dance Theatre and Modern Dance are interconnected because they all relate to Laban's choreographic work, movement training and dance as art form. However, they all materialised in different ways and created different traditions of practice, each of them sustaining particular memories of Laban praxis.

In this sense, the German *Ausdruckstanz* (or Holm's modern dance in the USA) came from an acquired movement knowledge with Laban back in the 1910's (Wigman, 1975). From Wigman's *Ausdruckstanz*, for example, emerged Hanya Holm's school and later Alvin Nikolais' dance practice, which is recognised as containing Laban's movement principles (Siegel, 2007: 61; Steinman, 1995: 78). From the same strand of practice emerged the AM method. AM was developed by Wigman's former dancer the therapist Mary Starks Whitehouse who merged Wigman's *Ausdruckstanz* with Jung's psychotherapy principles (Stromsted, 2009; Whitehouse, 1999). It configures as a somatic and therapeutic practice based on movement that emerges from the person's inner impulses.

These materialisations compete with Dance Theatre or Laban's choreographic dance-making (Preston-Dunlop, 1998a, 2013b). From Laban's choreographies, Dance Theatre grew to be associated with Jooss's practices and later with Jooss's student Pina Bausch, whose 'debt to Laban's dance theatre is visible' (Partsch-Bergsohn, 2013;

Preston-Dunlop, 1998a: 271). A. V. Coton describes how Jooss developed his modern dance based on Laban's movement principles, linking the classroom (educational dance) with the stage whilst training the dancers (Coton in Winearls, 1968: 11–15). In fact, Suzanne Walther states that Jooss's dance theatre actually stemmed out of *Ausdruckstanz* (Walther, 1993: 11). Jooss systematised his own practice for dance training and choreography (Markard and Markard, 1985), where an experienced Laban-practitioner can immediately notice the use of Laban's Choreutics and Eukinetics (as I observed in a workshop on Jooss's *Green Table* led by Dr. Clare Lidbury in the 2015 Laban Guild AGM).

Also from Laban's choreographic work emerged Preston-Dunlop's Choreological Studies, which focuses on the study of dance as an art form (notes from Preston-Dunlop's classes at Trinity Laban). Preston-Dunlop (Preston-Dunlop, 1980b; Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2010) worked alongside a group of collaborators from the Trinity-Laban conservatoire in London towards systematising an analytical framework for investigating and creating dance based on Laban praxis. Despite having the same roots as dance theatre or even *Ausdruckstanz*, Choreological Studies reveals a very different focus that relates to an analytical and semiotic stance towards dance making (as I experienced during my diploma in Choreological Studies at Trinity Laban).

Art of Movement and Modern Educational Dance were strands of practice that Laban initiated towards the end of his career in the 1940s and 1950s (Laban, 1963). They were both taken forward by the English cohort associated with the Laban Guild and the former Laban Art of Movement Studio (Burt, 1995)<sup>3</sup>. In addition, the Guild has been advocating and stimulating the work developed in these strands through regular annual workshops, foundation courses and the publication of the *Movement, Dance & Drama Magazine*. In the annual AGM meetings of the Guild (2011 through 2015) I observed a large number of teachers who advocate this strand in their individual activities.

Dance Movement Psychotherapy was a development from Laban's Modern Educational Dance associated with psychotherapy (Meekums, 2002). Laban's former students Chloe Gardner and Audrey Wethered took it forward from the 1950s onwards.

Later students from the Art of Movement Studio also became involved, such as pupils of Marion North, Walli Meir, Lisa Ullmann and former students of Mary Wigman (Association of Dance Movement Psychotherapy, 2013).

From Laban's behaviour and industrial movement analysis emerged Warren Lamb's Action Profile (Davies, 2001; Lamb, 1965; McCaw, 2006; Lamb in Reisel, 2008) and Marion North's Personality Assessment (North, 1990b). Both North and Lamb initiated their work in collaboration with Laban himself in the 1950's. However, North's work did not become as popular as Lamb's. Today Lamb's work is also known and reproduced as Movement Pattern Analysis (Goldman, 2003).

LMA, KMP and BMC were strands of practice that evolved from Laban's Effort and later Effort-Shape praxis. LMA was developed by Irmgard Bartenieff who had been a pupil of Laban in Germany in 1925, before immigrating to the United States in the early 1930s. While in the United States, Bartenieff further associated Laban praxis with her training in physical therapy, developing the Bartenieff Fundamentals™ (Bartenieff, 1980; Hackney, 2010) and thus formalising a somatic practice in the Laban studies field. The somatic perspective of LMA was the stepping-stone for the systematisation of KMP envisioned by Bartenieff's student, psychoanalyst Dr. Judith Kestenberg (Kestenberg, 1999). Similarly, the BMC method developed by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (Cohen, 1993) resulted from the combination of LMA and KMP practices.

The way in which the individuals responsible for these strands acquired Laban praxis and further disseminated it suggests the composition of genealogies tracing them to their origin, and arriving back at Laban's praxis. It also involves their own way of working (choreographically, educationally, and etc.) and transmitting further the heritage acquired. As outlined, the diverse practices drew on specific principles, interests or practices that originate from Laban's discourse. Then, the practices are characterised by the emphasis given to a certain activity. Despite the arrangement of practices into heritages or lineages, when observed closely their similarities and differences overlap, as they all originated from Laban's founding enquiries and discourse. However, the forms (or products) that they generate (choreography, analysis, pedagogy or even written papers) vary.

## **2. Embodied Transmission – Laban Praxis from a Body to Another**

I recognise that in each of the strands of Laban praxis mentioned above, the knowledge was passed from one person to another through apprenticeship, reflecting a range of bodily/movement practices. As discussed earlier, movement and dance classes (or studio learning environments) have been the primary means for exploring (Laban's) movement principles of space and dynamics and thus the place where praxis is attained. I have experienced this pattern of transmission myself through different encounters with Laban praxis over the past thirteen years. Alongside understanding the body as the medium of transmission and appropriation of dance practice (Desmond 1997: 34), the body also becomes a vehicle (Hahn, 2007: 2) for the consolidation or modification of dance. This configures the embodiment, incorporation of practice or kinetic transmission<sup>4</sup>, immanent in the transmission of all strands of Laban praxis. In this way, a practice dislocates through 'physical transportation', which as Desmond (1997: 43) holds, involves not only the teacher-apprentice relationship but also the migration of performers, teachers and choreographers from one locale to another.

When a practitioner reaches a new locale they have the chance to reinscribe their technique or movement principles in a new social context (Desmond, 1997: 34), adding subjectivity to the discourse but nonetheless maintaining the tradition of a specific practice. The embodied tradition of Laban's praxis being uninterruptedly passed down (generationally) from one person to another, reveals a migration of a gestural practice (Noland and Ness, 2008) among bodies and spaces. This also guarantees the perpetuation of the memory of Laban's persona and his discourse through history, as it remains inscribed in the bodies and practices of generations of artists.

The migration of Laban-practices features the inward inscription consequent of the embodiment of Laban's movement principles (praxis). Ness (2008: 5) explains that an inscription is a (migratory) motion which goes towards something (never arriving in a

place). Yet, gestural inscription renders a continuous motion of developing a movement memory. Ness (2008:6) suggests that the 'marks' left by movement in a person's inner bodily structure are revealed when the body is in motion (or delivering gestures). This understanding reflects Laban's own thinking that movement influences a person's physical structure. In this perspective, the body and its 'inside-outishly' (Ness, 2008: 24) acts as the medium of transmission of motion/knowledge/gesture. In this way, Laban praxis becomes embedded in the person's actions and is thus transmitted together with its activities and locomotion.

In order to further understand how the body and its movement can be the locus of knowledge that is passed on from generation to generation, it is worth looking at the work of the performance studies scholar Joseph Roach. This is because the permanence of Laban (embodied) memory through generations of practitioners creates 'mnemonic reserves' of Laban's discourse. In a similar approach to Ness, Roach (1996: 26) takes mnemonic reserves to refer to that (embodied memory) which is passed on from one generation to the next. Roach, however, considers transmission (of practical knowledge or embodied practice) as the process by which material is re-enacted by people who transform it further through their own individual practice. The re-enactment of a practice suggests that the inwardly inscribed knowledge is not only transported, but is also modified across the generations. The practices of each generation add to the original material, which in the case of this research would mean supporting a perpetuation of Laban's discourse through time and space.

Accepting embodied or gestural knowledge as a vehicle for transmission of information (Noland, 2008: xi), Taylor (2003: 46) adds that the tradition of passing information to others takes place through a series of 'acts of transfer'. Drawing on Taylor, I propose that the strands of Laban practices were developed or unpacked through specific acts of transfer. According to Diana Taylor (2003), the acts of transfer are generative models of cultural continuity and reveal the ways in which repertoire is transferred amongst individuals and generations. Taylor categorises them as follows: doubling, replication/proliferation and surrogation (*idem*). These suggest a specific

framework that holds or collapses the structures of transmission of embodied knowledge. In fact, when associating Taylor's acts of transfer to Laban's heritage they not only indicate modes of transmission but also express the diversity of preservation strategies of Laban praxis memory or how it remains and is carried throughout history.

I maintain that the background of where a specific strand of praxis has emerged illuminates the way in which it is replicated to future generations. For example, the Laban Guild and professionals working with Modern Educational Dance safeguarded a doubling of the praxis, preserving the integrity of Laban's discourse. Taylor (2003: 46) explains that doubling preserves rather than erases the antecedents in a genealogical line, fostering a continuity of the stories told. In this sense, the Laban Guild preserves the lineage of antecedents that leads back to Laban. The Guild has been active for over sixty years in promoting publications, courses/workshops, and conferences aiming to sustain and support the 'sheer vitality of Laban's ideas' (Laban Guild, 2014). Reinforcing this status, the Guild's *Constitution* (Laban Guild, 2011) emphasises the promotion and advancement of the 'study and practice of human movement particularly recognising the contribution made by the late Rudolf Laban'. Laban's former long-time collaborator Lisa Ullmann also guaranteed the doubling of Laban's legacy when she edited (Laban and Ullmann, 1984), translated (Laban, 1975) and posthumously published (Laban, 1966) Laban's monographs, securing the memory of Laban praxis in written form.

Examples of Taylor's second category - replication and proliferation of Laban's discourse – include Valerie Preston-Dunlop's *Choreological Studies* and Irmgard Bartenieff's *LMA*. Taylor (2003: 46) holds that replication and proliferation allow further and novel developments to be considered as representation of the material itself, enabling multiple pasts and concomitant representations of it. This means that both *Choreological Studies* (see Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2010) and *LMA* (see Hackney, 2010) are taken as Laban praxis themselves, despite presenting individual additions to Laban's original theory. An example is the *Journal of Laban Movement Studies* which name indicates a general association with Laban praxis. However the publication seems to be directed to *LMA* practices as it is edited by the LIMS and privately distributed to the

Institution's members, not having open access nor calls for papers to the general community of Laban-practitioners. Roughly, LMA proposed the BESS - Body, Effort, Space and Shape structure, adding the categories of Body and Shape to Laban's Effort (Eukinetiks) and Space (Choreutiks) (Hackney, 2010). Likewise Choreological Studies proposed a structural model of a five-point star. This star is composed of Action, Dynamics, Space, Body, Relationships and is used to create and analyse dance and theatre works (Preston-Dunlop, 1980b). Action, Body and Relationships were not part of Laban's initial praxis framework.

Taylor's third category, surrogation, is evident in the work of the German choreographers and former collaborators of Laban, Kurt Jooss and Mary Wigman. These choreographers surrogate Rudolf Laban, bringing different aesthetics, training techniques and perspectives to Laban praxis, and thus enabling a collapse of historical links among them. According to Taylor (2003: 46), Roach's (1996: 2) concept of surrogation brings a different framework of cultural continuity, enabling even vital historical links to remain hidden. Both Wigman and Jooss gave names to their practice, which exclude Laban's terminologies, thus masking the presence of Laban's discourse in their practices.

Despite this bold classification of Laban's discourse and strands of practice in relation to acts of transfer, their genealogies were not disseminated through a single act of transfer. For example, in Valerie Preston-Dunlop's project of re-creation of Laban's dance theatre works (Preston-Dunlop, 2013b; Preston-Dunlop and Sayers, 2011) she conceives a doubling of Laban's choreographic practice, aiming to recover Laban's lost and forgotten dances. Preston-Dunlop explains that she also shared 'responsibility and co-authorship' (Preston-Dunlop and Sayers, 2011) with Laban, adding materials and creative solutions to the choreographies. Throughout Preston-Dunlop's career she also demonstrates constant shifts among different acts of transfer. In the 1960s she was doubling Laban's discourse through her publications (Preston-Dunlop, 1966, 1963, 1969), offering detailed explanations of its frameworks, uses and applications. Later in her career she published her own research (Preston-Dunlop, 1980; 2010) involving Laban praxis, which both surrogates and proliferates Laban's discourse.



### 3. Migration of Practice – Memory and Forgetting of Laban Praxis

In the heritages of Laban's discourse, the different strands that were perpetuated through generations of practitioners reflect the migration of practice through bodies and territories. This means that the way in which one engages with Laban praxis either doubling, replicating or surrogating, contributes to sustain specific memories of Laban's discourse. Roach (1996) reminds us that acts of transmission and substitution, such as doubling, replication or surrogation produce memory. Hence, the process of conveying embodied knowledge involves an appropriation of the material which happens in the form of memory or forgetting (Roach, 1996: 26). Memory and forgetting are part of a generational transmission of performative practice or as Roach defined it, performance genealogies (Roach, 1996). In this sense both memory and forgetting draw on the possibility of 'expressive movement as mnemonic reserves' (*idem*). In the same vein, while analysing the transmission of practice in different dance forms, Cynthia Jean Cohen Bull (1997) recognises that each (unique) process of transmission in dance influences and shapes the styles, behaviour and even ideas of the people involved with it. This means that movement and practice are carriers of memory that is either visible or invisible (forgetting), shaping the current form of a movement practice.

Based on these assumptions, I take the development of mnemonic reserves to discuss different practices of Laban's heritage and how they expose (labelling a Laban-practice as such) or efface Laban's movement principles into artistic composition or training. I propose that activities such as teaching modern dance, Choreutics/Eukinetics, movement education, somatic practices, educational dance, movement therapy and the assembling of movement choirs, as well as the writing of articles and books, determine the types of transmission and memory developed out of Laban praxis.

For example, Laban, Ullmann, Jooss and Holm (among others), transmitted Laban's modern dance practice to Vivien Bridson (Bridson, 2015), who today teaches her

own style of dance class, including exercises of barre-work and centre-work intertwined with creative improvisations by the students<sup>5</sup>. How much of Laban praxis is embedded in Bridson's class, and how much has it been diluted in the stylised exercises that she proposes? Even though Bridson explained to me (during informal conversations after her classes) her uses of Laban's Choreutics and Eukinetics in her exercises during class (Bridson, 2015), it is most likely that someone who is not familiar with Laban praxis would not notice. In this case Roach remarks that the paradox of the (collective) perpetuation of memory is that 'memory is a process that depends crucially on forgetting' (1996:02). In fact, memory, as a 'perpetually actual phenomenon' (Nora, 1989: 8) is, according to Roach, a 'living memory', transmitted through gestures, habits and skills (Roach, 1996: 26).

Following Roach's perspective, the embodied memory that is being generated in Bridson's class is at the same time a forgetting of Laban praxis. I must be one of the few students in Bridson's class who can trace the genealogy of the exercises she proposes to Laban's Choreology. Most of the students seem to be unaware of the (Laban) movement principles she is working with, and continue to train them without this awareness. Nonetheless they come out of the class having embodied Laban's fundamental Choreutics and Eukinetics principles. It is most likely that this teaching pattern has been a practice that Bridson learned from her own teachers and perhaps even Laban<sup>6</sup>. This suggests that the forgetting of Laban praxis in this heritage of transmission is inherent in the process.

Thus, I believe that the forgetting of Laban's heritage is present when Laban praxis is embedded in individual or collective practices that do not label what they do (as in Bridson's class). Laban praxis is forgotten in the sense that when transmitted to the students or apprentices, the discourse is no longer flagged up. Nonetheless Laban's movement principles are still embedded, perpetuating the heritage in the body of the practitioners. In this scenario, Laban praxis is present but is not restored; rather, its memory acts as a gestural inscription in the bodies (Noland and Ness, 2008).

Forgetting reveals, for example, the surrogation that occurred on the genealogy of practices that originated with Laban, was passed down to Jooss, Holm and other artists and is finally being materialised in Bridson's classes. In this case, the historical continuity of Laban's Choreology was disrupted when Jooss created his own dance training methodology, 'more systematic and rigorous' (than Laban's own), in an attempt to consolidate a system of teaching modern dance, which Laban never accomplished (Walther, 1994: 38). The memory of Laban praxis in the genealogy of Jooss's method has been gradually slipping into a forgetting, while it becomes embedded in the practice to the extent that it sometimes becomes unrecognisable.

On the other hand, I associate the memory developed of Laban praxis with the systematic acquisition and transmission of a strand of practice which labels and categorises the individual within Laban's heritage. In this case I consider that memory also includes the development of institutions that award diplomas in various strands of Laban's discourse. An example of this mode of transmission is the work of Preston-Dunlop, which is linked to an institution that 'holds' Laban knowledge, delivering classes focussed on Laban's movement principles and categories (I experienced this transmission myself during classes at Trinity Laban from 2011 to 2014). Other instances are the people who offer courses which aim to deliver art of movement principles and instruct students in Laban praxis. An example is the practice by Geraldine Stephenson (Stephenson in Reisel, 2008; McCaw and Stevenson, 2003, 2006) and Anna Carlisle (notes from workshop August, 2013), who have given classes where Laban's principles are thoroughly investigated by the participants, using Laban's original nomenclature and movement codes (such as the use of movement harmony scales and Effort explorations).

Considering the preservation of (embodied) memory of Laban praxis, Nora argues that the aliveness of memory remains in a permanent evolution that is open to the dialectic of memory and forgetting (1989: 8). The deformations of memory are unattended and therefore vulnerable to latent periods and periodical recoveries. When associating Nora's rationale to Laban's discourse I identify that the generation of artists that descend from Laban praxis are able to bring forth its principles in different moments of their

choreographic practice, despite the fact that they do not explicitly label this practice as Laban-related. This is visible in Forsythe's choreography where we can associate his work with Laban's Choreutics, especially when considering it from the lens of his 'improvisation technologies'<sup>7</sup> (Forsythe, 2012). However, in an informal chat with one of the dancers at the back door of the theatre after one of the Company's performances in Brazil (in 2004),<sup>8</sup> I remember the dancer telling me that Forsythe never mentioned Laban or his principles to her and that they (the dancers) did not know anything about Laban. This suggests a dialectics of memory and forgetting of Laban praxis that can be held as a latent knowledge or recovered as an active memory when pronounced or consciously addressed.

#### **4. Practices of Memory and Forgetting of Laban in Brazil**

The transmission of Laban praxis to Brazil reflects the on-going dissemination of Laban-practices mentioned earlier, transferring through generations of practitioners, from teachers to students. In this genealogy, Chinita Ullman learned with Mary Wigman; Maria Duschenes learned with Kurt Jooss, Rudolf Laban and Lisa Ullmann; Renée Gumiel learned from Jooss and Laban, and so forth. Having acquired the praxis through studio practice (dance), they replicated it, maintaining the same flow of dissemination of praxis to their pupils within the studio environment (Bozon, 1995; Guimaraes, 1998; Gumiel in Navas and Dias, 1992; Sucena, 1988).

As stated above, diverse transmissions of practice generate distinct memory material (Bull, 1997; Roach, 1996). Roach (1996: 26) defines this process as 'practices of memory'. He categorises these practices as kinesthetic imagination, vortices of behaviour and displaced transmission. These function according to the type of activity sustained by the practitioner, enabling the transportation of practices through bodies and boundaries (space). Roach elaborates that displaced transmission configures the adaptation of historic practices to changing conditions in processes of surrogation (or substitution) (*idem*: 29); that kinaesthetic imagination is closely related to a way of thinking through

movement that co-exists with archival memory (*idem*: 27); and that vortices of behaviour function as a catalyst, legitimatising everyday practices and developing collective memory (*idem*: 28).

In Brazil, ample combinations of practices of memory of Laban's discourse are expressed. They are related to the activity that a practitioner engages in and the strand or heritage that this activity originated from, which generates both memory and forgetting of Laban praxis. There are those who transmit the material as labelled content in systematic teaching approaches and award certificates, enforcing the memory of Laban's discourse, whereas others embed Laban praxis in their artistic production through displacement, refashioning and transfer of memories into representation (or performance), enabling the forgetting of Laban's discourse.

Perhaps the greatest exponent of the development of Laban memory in Brazil, as recognised by the local Laban community, is Maria Duschenes (Amadei, 2006). Her practice of memory took place in a teaching environment, which supported her studio-based transmission of knowledge. Despite her development of repertoire, there is also an archive of her activities based on the memory of her pupils, who today are able to shape their endorsement of Laban praxis acquired with Duschenes, either through their own teaching or through publications. An example is Lenira Rengel who acquired Laban praxis knowledge with Duschenes and has disseminated it nationwide through publications, including teaching manuals.

In a similar pattern of repertoire transmission artists such as Cilô Lacava, Joana Lopes, Renata Macedo Soares Solange Arruda, Marina Martins, Ligia Tourinho, Denise Telles-Hofstra, Marina Salomon and Adriana Bonfati organise courses that deliberately include art of movement in their syllabi. This means that they displace the transmission of the praxis, adding their personal motivation to their teaching of Laban's movement principles. Nonetheless they multiply awareness of Laban's legacy in Brazil.<sup>9</sup>

Rather than impelling further perpetuation of Laban memory in the country, the variety of displacements generated through different activities has instead diversified its

scope. For example, Joana Lopes bases her work on the archive (Laban's publications and mainly his *Mastery of Movement*). Her interdisciplinary work, however, explores specific details of movement qualities in relation to the dynamics of sub-atomic particles. So, despite drawing on the archive, Lopes has proposed a unique way of exploring movement principles, thus engendering a repertoire.<sup>10</sup>

Art of Movement and LMA practices in Brazil were established through the archive memory as well as dance classes (repertoire) of Regina Miranda (Miranda, 1980, 2008b), Ciane Fernandes (Fernandes, 2006a, 2007a), Analívia Cordeiro (Cordeiro, 1998), Cybele Cavalcanti (Cordeiro, Cavalcanti and Homburger, 1998), Lenira Rengel (Rengel, 2003, 2008b), Maria Mommensohn (Mommensohn and Petrella, 2006; Mommensohn and Roizenblit, 2002), and Yolanda Amadei (Amadei, 2006, 2007). These publications add to these practitioners' repertoire an archive of their practices, thus enabling their work to reach and influence a larger number of people. In addition, their practices operate through replication of kinaesthetic imagination, existing independently but coextensively with the archive - writings and publications of the field. Furthermore, these are used to support their practices and further inform their students.

The scholarship mentioned above is based on Laban's discourse and demonstrates, through the rendering of the artists' experiences into archive, a displaced transmission of praxis. This transmission is characterised by the adaptation of Laban praxis to their ways of interacting and reacting to it. The publications themselves create vortexes of behaviour, channeling Laban praxis to be further reproduced by their readers. Other examples of such vortexes are Laban-specific courses such as Miranda's taught postgraduate course in LMA (launched in 2011); Telles-Hofstra's course on Art of Movement (introduced in 2006) and Cilô Lacava's course on Laban's Art of Movement and education (offered periodically since 1998).

The artists who have Laban praxis inwardly inscribed offer and transfer different experiences of Laban's discourse. Renée Gumiel provides an example of the forgetting of Laban praxis in Brazil. Despite the memory developed from her Laban-training, Gumiel disseminated the material through her modern dance practice. When asked about her

practice, Gumiel points out that she sits inside a 'modern dance heritage' (Gumiel in Navas and Dias, 1992). Despite having trained professionally within a Laban tradition, and acquiring an embodied memory of its movement principles, she did not claim to include Laban discourse in her activities. This is because she saw her practices as part of a larger modern dance tradition and not tied to a single framework. Her forgetting is evident in the fact that among the thirty interviews conducted for this thesis, only one practitioner - Rogerio Migliorini - mentioned having been introduced to Laban by Gumiel.

Other examples of inward inscription of Laban praxis are in the work of the choreographers Marta Soares and Juliana Moraes. Soares and Moraes trained in Laban-related institutions and were awarded Laban-diplomas in two different strands of Laban praxis - LMA and Choreological Studies (Moraes, 2008; Soares, 2008a). However, they have been transmitting their mnemonics through their forgetting: embedded in their artistic and choreographic productions. Having watched both of these artists perform, I conclude that it is not possible to label their artistic product under one category of Laban praxis. Other examples of similar practice of memory rest in a number of Duschene's former pupils such as Acácio Valim, Adalberto da Palma, Lia Robatto, Rogério Migliorini, Uxa Xavier and Janice Vieira who have been engaged in the community of Laban practitioners and bring about their forgetting of Laban's discourse in their choreographic and teaching activities.

In a different context, Yanka Rudzka and Rolf Gelewski were already trained under a surrogation process that disrupted a historical continuity of Laban discourse within the *Ausdruckstanz* tradition. Each gave continuity to the practice they acquired, establishing a forgetting of Laban praxis in their teaching and choreographic activities. Perhaps neither Rudzka nor Gelewski wanted to label their activities under Laban's framework, despite their students recognising the influences in Rudzka and Gelewski's practices. Yet they have also produced memory of the Laban praxis, as pupils such as Robatto (2008), Martins (2008) and Amadei (2006, 2007) recall. Through kinesthetic imagination, accessing simultaneously the archive and the repertoire, these artists transferred movement training that is now part of Laban's heritage in Brazil. Despite having blurred

the division between Laban praxis and their own personal motivation within it, they created environments of memory where Laban's movement principles are nonetheless embedded in their practices. Each of these artists transformed the heritage of Laban praxis following their own aspirations, fostering a displaced transmission of the material to other Brazilian practitioners.

### **Conclusion: Transmission and Memory of Laban Praxis**

In this chapter I have surveyed different ways of considering the transmission of Laban praxis and the consolidation of different strands of Laban's discourse. In addition I categorised and grouped the strands of Laban's discourse according to the way they preserve or efface the memory of Laban praxis throughout history. This organisation builds on the chronological view of the heritage of Laban praxis, approaching a perspective based on the memory and practices themselves.

In fact I argue that the different strands of practice that evolve from Laban praxis (Laban and/or his collaborators) influenced the way that the material is being transmitted through generations of practitioners and is available today. This allows the formation of clusters, built in relation to the type of practice from which they descend - artistic/choreographic, pedagogic or degree/educational. In this way, the different practices that compose Laban's discourse were combined according to their origin - the person who proposed it or according to the type of memory developed from it.

By understanding movement practice as both the means (through which knowledge is passed from one person to another) and the product (where the knowledge acquired becomes a technique) of the transmission, then the body becomes the medium where Laban praxis resides and through which it is transmitted. Within this framework, each practitioner added their own perspective and experience to Laban praxis, inscribing their



own corporeality in Laban's discourse (details of specific inscription will be given throughout Chapters Five and Six, and further debated in Chapter Seven).

The different ways of absorbing, appropriating and replicating the variety of strands of Laban praxis admits a possibility of linking them to specific 'acts of transfer'. The gathering of the strands of practice into three modes of transferring movement knowledge generated an overview of Laban's heritage based on archive and repertoire as well as on memory and forgetting of Laban praxis.

The Brazilian scenario presented through this framework reveals that the acts of transfer not only determine the way the memory is being passed on to future generations but also the way in which memory is enacted and reproduced in the present. The groups of artists who maintain a systematic practice enable the memory of Laban to be further disseminated in the country. This is true in particular for the individuals who are linked to educational institutions that present Laban praxis in their syllabus. In contrast I have identified a group of practitioners who, despite having had a formal (or institutional) training in Laban praxis, do not replicate the same systematics. In fact the praxis is embedded in their creation process or in their choreographic products, however, their practice itself is not reproduced under the Laban label.

This context suggests a plural perspective on the presence of Laban praxis in Brazil, without being bound to the generational transmission of practice, diplomas or certificates. Alongside the established memory of Laban praxis it reveals the diversity of practices that promote Laban's discourse without the commitment of having to perpetuate a legacy. It also suggests that the diversity of practices, either through memory or through forgetting, maintains the historical continuity of Laban's discourse in Brazil, in the same way it has been happening internationally. We will now proceed to scrutinise specific practices that characterise the Brazilian field of Laban studies and reveal how they articulate the discourse into a memory and forgetting of Laban in Brazil.

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## Notes to Chapter Four:

<sup>1</sup> During my research at the Laban Archive at the National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) I found a large amount of papers and notes, which indicated a lecture or a lecture demonstration that Laban most likely gave around England.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Chapter One, the most prominent ones are: *Ausdruckstanz*, Dance Theatre and Modern Dance; Art of Movement and Modern Educational Dance; Action Profile (of Movement Pattern Analysis - MPA); Laban Movement Analysis (LMA); Choreological Studies; Dance Movement Psychotherapy (or Dance Movement Therapy - DMT); Kestenberg Movement Profile (KMP); Body Movement Centering (BMC); and Authentic Movement (AM). Each of these strands was led and devised by a single person who collaborated with Laban or from a former student of Laban (first generation) or even from a student of a student of Laban (second generation) and so on.

<sup>3</sup> Ramsay Burt (1995) gives an account of how this movement evolved in the north of England.

<sup>4</sup> The term kinetic transmission is used by Buckland (2001: 10) who differentiates the transmission through incorporation of practice with the transmission using documents such as photographs, films and notation. In Laban's heritage this differentiation is important as Laban praxis includes not only physical activities but also a large amount of publications that discuss or even attempt to give instructions on how to develop a practice.

<sup>5</sup> I experienced Vivien Bridson's modern dance classes on a weekly basis during one year at the London Contemporary Dance School (The Place) from 2014 to 2015.

<sup>6</sup> During one of our informal conversations Bridson recollected her tuition with Laban and the way he verbalised images to incite Effort transformations. The use of images to provoke movement has not been common in the Laban-specific tuitions I experienced. In fact the topic was even discussed during my SDCD classes, where the use of images rather than Laban-specific terminologies to incite movement qualities was the subject of lengthy debate.

<sup>7</sup> *Improvisation Technologies* is the title of a DVD which the choreographer William Forsythe arranged to disclose part of his choreographic tools. This material includes detailed videos that demonstrate the choreographer's use of the body in relation to the possibilities of tracing spaces. It is a visual material that can be closely associated with Laban's Space Harmony principles, despite Laban's name not being mentioned in the DVD. Elsewhere (Forsythe in Reisel, 2008) the choreographer has clearly stated his use of Laban's movement principles for his choreographic work.

<sup>8</sup> In 2004 I was already interested in investigating further Rudolf Laban's practices. I was already aware that Forsythe was somehow related to Laban praxis (Baudoin and Gilpin, 1989). By chance, at the end of the performance I saw the dancers leaving the theatre and I approached two of them to enquire about Laban. I asked them if Forsythe taught them Laban's movement principles. This was when they replied to me that Forsythe did not speak about Laban to them. This information stuck in my mind.

<sup>9</sup> Note: I have personally experienced the teaching of Ciane Fernandes, Cilo Lacava, Joana Lopes and Lenira Rengel

<sup>10</sup> I experienced Joana Lopes' work during three years during my dance undergraduate course at the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP), having participated in workshops, performing in her lecture-demonstrations and also having Lopes as my BA dissertation and performance tutor (see Scialom, 2010).

## **Chapter Five: Brazilian Laban-Lives - Congruence and Experience**

Considering the ample scope of Laban practices that have been evolving in Brazil since 1940's (as described in Chapter Three), the current chapter narrows the focus and examines three individuals who have been praised for their contributions to the local field of Laban studies. Ciane Fernandes, Lenira Rengel and Regina Miranda are three Brazilian Laban-practitioners who have developed outstanding scholarship and reputation in Brazil. They were selected not only for having distinguished themselves locally but also for producing work that is considered internationally relevant to the field of movement studies. I am not only interested in the work of these practitioners but also in their lives in general, including the ways in which their life influences their work and vice versa. In the following three chapters (Chapters Five, Six and Seven) I will consider their work as representations of the local Brazilian community of Laban practitioners, offering concrete examples of the generalised discussions developed in Chapters Three and Four.

To investigate how these three artists encountered and became acquainted with Laban praxis, I consider their individual backgrounds and subjectivity. For example, as a Professor in Performing Arts, Fernandes follows an autobiographical trajectory (where her own life is constantly inspiring her to produce art and scholarship) that keeps her in a constant creative and productive flux of performance and research. What stands out is that Fernandes is immersed in an interdisciplinary field and threads a variety of disciplines with Laban scholarship. In this way she merges theatrical, creative, therapeutic, social, political, philosophical and scientific knowledge. Therefore in her practice, Laban's discourse has become the thread for multiple connections and interactions.

In another context, the choreographer and entrepreneur Regina Miranda draws on everyday behaviour in a cosmopolitan environment in order to develop choreographic practice and explore possibilities for creating art. In her recent work, she investigates ways

in which social contexts inspire artistic production and vice versa. In these circumstances the artist and her artwork are in harmony and correspond to the environment she inhabits. Miranda develops this practice by attempting to craft a theory which can speak of the spaces generated and the relationships established through performance activity. Her impetus to systematise her practices (through the development of methods and concepts) is revealed throughout her discourse, which I further associate with Laban's own systematic praxis.<sup>1</sup>

As a dance pedagogue and practitioner, Lenira Rengel approached the Laban scholarship through an educational pathway. Her pedagogical orientation has influenced the development of her career since her teenage years. In addition, Rengel reveals a strong inclination for the epistemology of cognitive science and theories of communication and semiotics. Seeing dance as a 'form of communication', she reveals the influence of cognitive sciences, communication and semiotics in her current practice and mind-set.

When examining the work of these three practitioners I realised that they offer relevant outputs in relation to the international field of Laban studies.<sup>2</sup> In this current chapter I compare and contrast their work in relation to their individual histories, primarily focussing on describing their background and the ways they acquired Laban knowledge. Thus the specifics of their individual work will be discussed in Chapter Six. The amount of information provided about the practitioners is not uniform, but reveals considerable disparities among them. The rationale for this structure responds to the diverse amount of information each has made available alongside their willingness to share their activities with me. In this way I chose not to attempt to balance the different amounts of data collected, but to accept and display the information I was given access to by each practitioner.

With the data collected I aim to trace how each practitioner arrived at Laban's discourse, and how they employed it to match their personal ambitions. Aiming to develop a balanced account of each artist, I chose not to follow the multi-disciplinary perspectives that each engages with (semiotics and neuroscience; somatics and dance theatre; sociology and psychology, respectively). Instead, the work and ideas of all three

individuals are analysed based on their contribution to and the links established with the Laban-scholarship. My own embodied knowledge reinforces my choice, centralising a Laban-perspective as the main lens from which I consider their activities. It is from this perspective that this chapter evolves and introduces specific Brazilian practitioners.

### **1. Experience, Co-existence and Confidence – Setting the Field Research.**

The experience I developed with the practitioners was diverse and determined by the extent to which they allowed me to engage with their work during the research. I had two major encounters with the practitioners. The first one took place in 2008 while I was collecting data for the oral history of Laban practices in Brazil. The second encounter involved participant observation of their lives and professional activities which took place between November 2012 and January 2013. In this period I lived with each practitioner for one or two weeks.

As discussed in Chapter Two, in order to collect data I engaged in an embodied ethnography (Bacon, 2006; David, 2012; Ness, 2004; Sklar, 2000) as well as co-existing with the artists (Conquergood, 2004), following their activities and daily routine. The informality in the field work environment is an important factor for the co-existence process (Boden and Molotch, 1994), where the engagement of the subjects with my enquiry allowed them to hold back or open up to share their daily lives, research and artistic practices. In addition, the choice of experiencing their lives with an open hypothesis (grounded research enquiry) allowed the collected data to speak for itself.

During this ethnographic encounter the collection of data was strongly dependent on the relationship of confidence that I developed with the practitioners. This relationship involved my positioning as a (young) researcher and their sense (as senior practitioners) of being participants in my investigation. Robert Burgess (1991) points out that the development of confidence in the field research is essential to the collection of data, while

Becker suggests that this can be a laborious process that takes time (Becker in Burgess, 1991: 2).

In this regard, Fernandes trusted me with the possibility of experiencing the full spectrum of her activities as a researcher and higher education lecturer in undergraduate and postgraduate courses, artistic practice and daily life, while I was lodged in her countryside house in Lençóis for ten days.<sup>3</sup> This enabled me to collect a full range of experiences and information about her range of practices as well as conduct a narrative interview (adding to an earlier one I had conducted in 2008). It also enabled me to develop a number of informal conversations about her practice. A third period of data collection took place in July 2014, involving informal conversations during a week-long visit that Fernandes made to London in that month. Besides these face-to-face encounters, Fernandes has maintained regular contact, updating me about her recent research, performances and publications.

During the period of research with Rengel, my experience was built upon observing and taking part in her undergraduate teaching as well as her domestic activities for a full week. Rengel also invited me to lodge in her house in Salvador, where she is a lecturer at the Dance School of the UFBA. During my stay with her I was able to follow her daily routine, attend her classes at the University and conduct a narrative interview (which added to the first interview conducted in 2008). We also carried out a number of informal conversations about her practice. Despite allowing me into her house, Rengel did not maintain communication after this field research period, which restricted my access to her current work.

Regarding my investigation of Miranda's activities, the acquisition of experience in this case was exclusively related to the interviews and her teaching practice. In addition, I was able to experience her pedagogical thinking reflected in the Laban/Bartenieff Postgraduate course that she currently coordinates in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Miranda offered me the opportunity to observe her lectures and follow a two-week module of the course she runs. During this period, Miranda held one semi-practical class and two lectures. In addition, I was invited to participate in other practical Laban-related classes

that were given by guest teachers. In contrast to my experiences with Fernandes and Rengel, during my two-week stay in Rio de Janeiro (this time I had arranged my own lodging), Miranda did not give me a chance to conduct an interview. The interview was held three months later through audio-video online conversation using Skype software (see Appendix 1 for details), which added information to the first interview I conducted with her in 2008. Also, Miranda did not share her publications or scholarship. The fact that I had neither a chance to experience her research or choreography nor a chance to share her daily life activities narrowed my experience of her praxis. This clearly puts me in a different position when discussing her work in relation to the others.

The combination of contrasting relationships with the artists shaped my experience. As a result, different exchange frameworks were established, positioning my role as a researcher in a specific relationship to their practice. Fernandes, for example, invited me to meet her at the beach in Salvador on a Saturday morning, after I had followed a week of her graduate and undergraduate classes. While sharing a towel to sit on the sand she voluntarily (without having been asked) began to explain the work she had done during her teaching throughout the week. She was particularly excited to remember the exercises she had set and point out how the students responded to the activities.

A similar situation happened in relation to Rengel. While walking together back to her house after one of her classes she began to comment on the specific exercises she had given in the class. She revealed her pedagogical goals and the problematics of teaching in the evening classes of the Dance BA course. For instance Rengel underlined the obstacle in having to delay the classes to allow the students to arrive from their jobs as well as deal with the recurring absence of the students in the course. In spite of these issues she mentioned being particularly inspired by the enthusiasm of the students who, after a full time working day/job (from 8am to 5pm), still demonstrated eagerness to attend her classes. From my own experience I noticed that enthusiasm for attending evening classes in HE courses is not common in Brazil, as full-time working hours overloads the students. Interestingly, Rengel was keen to listen to my personal experience of her

classes and what I had thought of them. She also took the opportunity to congratulate me for my good performance in the class.

Miranda on the other hand placed me in the position of a visitor student in her course rather than that of a researcher who was investigating her practice. I recognised myself in this position because she did not ask me, at any time, if I was being able to collect the data from her work. In this position I mainly engaged with the students' reception of her work rather than her own pedagogical view of the activities she proposed. In this case I did not receive information on the reasoning or background behind her teaching. Moreover we did not get a chance to develop informal conversations, which thus distanced me from her personal life and interests. Alongside the other students I could not help but to notice her leadership strategies that arose during the course Miranda coordinates.

The relationships and co-existences with Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda shaped my experience and the way I analyse and narrate the life and work of these three practitioners. Thus, my perception of their *modus operandi* is directly related to the confidence I felt and the position I assumed or was subjected to during the fieldwork. This empathetic epistemology (Spry, 2006) generated with the practitioners underpins the scope of the following discussions on their life experiences and development of practices.

## **2. Introducing the Brazilian Laban-Practitioners**

### **2.1 Ciane Fernandes**

I was sitting in front of Fernandes on a formation of rocks (typical of the region of Lençóis) where the flowing river surrounded us slipping through the cracks of the rocks, at times light and indirect and at others with a strong and direct free flow. The noise of the water hitting the rocks was strong, which made our conversation louder than usual throughout. This environment is part of Fernandes's routine, and it became my own during



the ten days I co-existed with her. Despite having spent an entire week lodged in her home, the only way to settle and carry out an interview with Fernandes was to follow her on her daily visit to the local river. Otherwise it would be impossible to catch her attention for more than ten minutes without interruption (from her son, phone calls, visitors, nanny, students, friends...). Fernandes herself keeps constantly busy with her academic and domestic work.

My first contact with Fernandes was in 2007 when I applied for a Masters course at UFBA. My interest in investigating Rudolf Laban led me to have Fernandes assigned as my supervisor. This means that I have been experiencing Fernandes' teaching and research since then.

Fernandes is a single parent of a nine-year-old boy who has been diagnosed with post-traumatic syndrome autism, and her life agenda (as an artist and researcher) is reflected in her private and professional pathways. She was born in 1965 in a small town in the central-west region of Brazil - Anápolis - and moved around the country throughout her childhood and adolescence. During her childhood she studied music in a conservatory (specialising in singing). Despite her artistic vein she opted for a Nursing undergraduate course because she was 'curious about the body' and wellbeing (Fernandes, 2008a, 2012a). It was during the Nursing course that she encountered arts-therapy and became fascinated by the patients' arts and crafts. This is where she realised that art could also be a medium for cure: 'I noticed that what really works out is art. Art is the only thing that was worthwhile' (Fernandes, 2008a).

The encounter with art therapy drove Fernandes to take a second degree in visual arts. It was during this course that she first experienced dance practice and Laban's discourse. At the same time she also discovered 'the matter of performance and the inter-arts' (Fernandes, 2012a). Her next steps were to enrol in an art-therapy diploma course where she was encouraged by one of the lecturers to continue her studies.

Fernandes received a grant from the Brazilian government to pursue a Masters in art-therapy at the Pratt Institute in New York. Not satisfied with the course, Fernandes

transferred to complete her studies at NYU, where she stayed until her PhD. It was during this period at NYU that Fernandes became involved in different dance activities and classes, and was formally introduced to Laban's Effort-Shape praxis. From this experience she decided to enrol in the one year certification programme offered by LIMS in NY to become a Certified Movement Analyst (CMA). Fernandes's PhD thesis, which later became her first book publication (Fernandes, 2000a), focused on analysing the work of the German choreographer Pina Bausch. In fact, a landmark in Fernandes's education and professional development was to watch Pina Bausch's *Palermo Palermo* (1989); she insists: 'for me it was before Christ and after Christ, before Palermo and after Palermo' (Fernandes, 2008i).

It was only during her postgraduate studies that Fernandes became involved with a thorough dance practice, specifically Douglas Dunn's postmodern/improvisation dance courses. Dunn immediately became an important mentor to her. She recalls that up until today she is constantly inspired by Dunn's improvisational perspective and admits that she continues to apply his framework in her own teaching.

She believes that her way into dance was different from that of most practitioners, as she only became involved with systematised movement practice during her postgraduate training. She suggests that her combined research and dance training may have consolidated her continuous association of conceptual thinking with thinking in movement. Furthermore, she investigated how thought and movement were integrated in her professional development in an early article of hers (Fernandes, 2000b).

On returning to Brazil after her doctorate and CMA certification Fernandes was employed by the Theatre School of the UFBA (in 1996), where she is still, in 2015, a member of staff<sup>4</sup>, teaching undergraduate and postgraduate courses. In 1997 she created the performance group *A-Feto*, where she began to work with actors and students of the University. Initially the group addressed the investigation of 'dance theatre as cultural-aesthetical research... articulating artistic creation and scientific mediation' (Fernandes, 2008b: 2–3). It evolved from the concept of 'inter-arts' which associated dance theatre to other artistic disciplines, configuring an 'intercultural' assemblage (*idem*: 3). In fact,

Fernandes has periodically updated me with the activities of the group, which remains active through its performances. In this sense, Fernandes has always combined the activities of *A-Feto* with her personal research. During an interview she highlighted *A-Feto*'s 'openness' to collaboration, which also relates to her 'inclusive' praxis (discussed in Chapter Six, Section I).

Fernandes's first performing experience occurred in 1992 during her doctorate. Hence she established herself as a performer together with her academic professional career when she moved to Salvador in 1996. From then on she has created more than fifteen shows that combine happenings, performance art and dance theatre or what Catarina Sant'Anna (2007) has named as post-dramatic theatre<sup>5</sup>. While analysing Fernandes's artistic practice Sant'Anna highlights its multi-culturalism involving her training in classical music (during her adolescence), nursing, visual arts, art-therapy, postmodern dance, Latin and Ballroom dances, Indian classical dance and *orixá*<sup>6</sup> dances. It reveals the mixture of cultures that she has been sensitive to as a result of her travelling and dance theatre productions. For example, I noticed myself that Fernandes integrates Bharatanatyam vocabulary in all her performances, improvisation sessions (which I saw on her videos during field research in December, 2012) and authentic movement practice (which I witnessed during the *Laban 2013* meeting in Monte Verità, Switzerland). In addition, Fernandes' multiculturalism is also evident in her daily life. For instance, during her stay in London in July 2014, I followed her to a selection of international food restaurants (such as Indian, Thai, Mexican, and Arab) as well as to a selection of Latin, Caribbean and Indian dancing parties.<sup>7</sup> The combination of these influences is directly reflected in her general openness and her professional artistic and academic productions (as I will discuss in Chapter Six).

In 2000 Fernandes published her first book (Fernandes, 2000a), which contains her PhD research on Pina Bausch (later published in English, see Fernandes, 2001). Immediately after this, she released her second monograph, an important reference in Portuguese of Laban and Bartenieff praxis (recently translated to English see Fernandes, 2015). The book was so popular that it was re-edited in 2006 (Fernandes, 2006a). The

book reveals Fernandes's own teaching practices, and is shaped as a manual that encourages the practice of Laban and Bartenieff's movement principles (as I observed when following her classes in 2008 and 2012). Apart from giving details of BESS scholarship, it describes exercises, includes images and suggests music to accompany the proposed exercises.

From 2009 Fernandes has been travelling to Lençóis in the countryside of the Bahia state, where she established a permanent home in 2010<sup>8</sup>. This decision has strongly influenced her professional life. Since then she has been contributing to the development of a cultural platform in the city<sup>9</sup> (Fernandes, 2012b). Her choice to establish herself in a quiet area is associated with her son's health condition. In fact, from her private and domestic sphere, her son has also become part of her professional, artistic and academic activities (Fernandes, 2013a). For example, she describes her son's integration into her solo work and group performances as a 'participative openness' rather than an inclusiveness (Fernandes, 2014a: 456). In fact this was the theme of a recent paper of hers, proposing a shift to the paradigm of the disabled or traumatised person claiming that '[i]n ecoperformance, the child becomes an active agent of his own somatic identity, rather than a passive patient to be stigmatized as autistic or victim of trauma' (*idem*). Her interest and developments in this topic demonstrates that her life is directly connected to her research and her art.

All in all, Fernandes merges her practice and her living experiences with her theoretical scholarship, publishing papers that theorise these activities. This forges an autobiographical way of working academically and combining theory with practice in artistic and academic research environments.

## **2.2 Lenira Rengel**

Rengel woke up early morning every day. By the time I woke up she would already be back from her daily morning exercise at the beach as she lives a five minutes' walk from one of the central beaches in Salvador and walking distance from the University where she lectures. I noticed that Rengel's life is extremely active and much centred around her work, and I did not witness her particularly engaging in any leisure activity while I was dwelling with her.

Rengel and her partner welcomed me in their home for six days during the northeast summer season where the sun rises at five in the morning and sets at seven in the evening. During these months the lowest temperature (at night) never drops below twenty-five degrees Celsius. The air in Salvador is humid and there is a constant breeze that blows from the sea. My body felt extremely heavy in such weather conditions and I struggled to keep up with Rengel's routine. In fact, slow and heavy movements have become part of a stereotypical image of the locals, and people tend to say that the dwellers of Salvador are relaxed or even 'lazy'.

Towards the end of my stay with Rengel I carried out a narrative interview. We were both sitting on the bed of her guest room (where I had been sleeping for the past week) when she travelled back in the past to tell me her story and describe the range of her practices.

I met Rengel for the first time in 2007 while I was engaged in the activities of the *Centro de Estudos da Dança* (Dance Research Centre - CED) in the city of São Paulo. Rengel was finishing her PhD and was a leading participant in the group. At that time I was applying for my Masters, and Rengel was instrumental in lending me books on Rudolf Laban so that I could write my research proposal. I came to meet her again during my Masters research, when I interviewed her for the first time in her home in the city of São Paulo in 2008. However, my first contact with Rengel's teaching practice was during a week-long workshop for dance students and professionals which she held in 2009.

When I asked her about her background in dance she explained that she has been dancing since she was thirteen years old. This statement reinforced her value of her long-

term training as a dance practitioner and instructor. Rengel was born in 1956 in the city of São Paulo, where she developed a pedagogical career from her early years. She began her dance training through classical ballet and modern dance classes. She also declared that she had started to teach dance early on, influenced by the premature death of her father. This incident may have incited her independence and led her to start teaching, as she depended on the income from her work (Rengel, 2012a).

Rengel believes that her premature career as a dance instructor was sparked by one of her teachers, who noticed her pedagogical aptitude. Recognising that she always enjoyed her teaching activities, today Rengel realises that she was not a dancer who became a teacher; rather she has always been a pedagogue. Her first classes were with adult students rather than young people. Interestingly, she only came to teach children after fifteen years of pedagogical practice. Throughout her extensive career she has worked with and taught a variety of people, from toddlers to elderly, as well as dance/theatre professionals, developing a huge amount of practical knowledge in teaching (Rengel, 2012a).

Wishing to continue her educational development Rengel enrolled in the Contemporary Theatre BA course at the University of São Paulo - USP (which is still the most well-known course in the country). At the same time she was already working professionally both as a dancer and as teacher. It was in the first year of her degree that she was introduced to Maria Duschenes who, according to Rengel, initiated her in the 'tri-dimensionality of the body and the space'. It was a 'milestone' in her life where she began to understand 'what dance was about' (Rengel, 2012a). She continued under Duschenes's tutelage for thirty years.

Later in her career, from 1998 to 2000 Rengel completed a Masters in Research at the State University of Campinas, under the supervision of the Laban-scholar Dr. Monica Serra. Her dissertation investigated her questions regarding 'Laban's language for movement'. It later became a publication, taking the premise of Laban's 'language of movement' to its ultimate form: the *Laban Dictionary* (Rengel, 2003).

A decade after completing her Masters, Rengel enrolled in a Doctorate course in the Communication and Semiotics Department of PUC-SP University, supervised by the Brazilian dance critic Dr Helena Katz. In her research Rengel reflected on her own teaching practice and working experience acquired over the years (Rengel, 2007b). Thus her thesis discusses the use of linguistic metaphors in dance pedagogy, reflecting her professional maturity. Her thesis scrutinises educational discourses and how they impact on the understanding that students develop of their bodies and practices. In this way, through theories of communication and cognitive science, she argues that the body, theory and practice are not independent from one another (Rengel, 2007b: VI).

In her professional career Rengel always worked alone as a solo artist and pedagogue, despite numerous collaborations with different groups and artists. Despite her continuous engagement with dance practice and occasional performances, today Rengel defines herself as a 'studio dancer' and feels that she is more of a teacher than a performer (Rengel, 2012a). I have not witnessed her performance practice myself and her work is not available online either. Nonetheless she underlines that if a performance opportunity comes up, she is 'always ready'. In this sense I noticed that she maintains daily dance and fitness activities, which, in fact, keeps her ready to move, as she proved while demonstrating exercises during her class. Nevertheless, the multiplicity of her training becomes evident in her teaching, which I observed, enhances the quality of her lectures. For example, in her classes at the Dance BA at UFBA, as well as giving workshop (in 2009) she demonstrated (physically) the mastery of a range of techniques including not only Laban's movement principles but also Yoga, Pilates and even Ballet exercises (further described in Chapter Six, Section II.4).

Currently, Rengel's work is focused on her academic activities lecturing undergraduate and postgraduate courses in dance studies. She mentioned with slight excitement that her position also includes administrative duties, which she sees as 'a great learning'. The fact that Rengel has not refused University administrative duties, as many Brazilian scholars do, revealed an interesting characteristic of her identity. This could be

summarised as a willingness to contribute to enhancements of the course, students' education and the institution itself, reinforcing her pedagogical inclination.

### **2.3 Regina Miranda**

I met Regina Miranda for the first time when I contacted her to carry out my oral history interview during the LABAN 2008<sup>10</sup> - celebrating 50 years of Laban's death in Rio de Janeiro. Since then we only met again during my field research carried out in January 2013. In these encounters our relationship was strictly professional, with no exchange of personal information, apart from the questions I asked her during the interview. This frame differs from the experience I had with the other practitioners investigated. Despite noting the intimate relationship Miranda has with her collaborators, I recognise that we were not able to develop a similar connection. Nonetheless she gave the impression of being polite and available to share information of her life and work.

I believe that the professional distance set between us reflects Miranda's current institutional and administrative leadership positions. For instance, during the two weeks of field research with Miranda in 2013, our relationship was restricted to brief encounters in the corridor when one of us was arriving at or departing from the school. In contrast to the other participants, Miranda did not, for example, speak to me about her intension in the course I was following and neither was she interested in my experience.

Meanwhile I established a closer contact with the students of her course, who shared with me their reading materials and personal impressions. This allowed me to shape an understanding of her work from the perspective of the students' experience.

My next encounter with Miranda happened through a one-to-one online video conversation six months after my visit to Rio de Janeiro. Miranda was sitting in front of the camera (computer) with a large and colourful painting behind her and I could hear the noises of the city of Rio de Janeiro (urban traffic) in the background. Miranda was fully



available to the interview. We had a long conversation of two and a half hours, where I allowed Miranda to exhaust the questions I had prepared. I noticed, however, that some of my questions were only partially answered, as Miranda was enthusiastic in detailing specific aspects of her work, such as her recent Creative City project.

Miranda was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1948 into a highly politicised family. She mentioned that her father was an active figure in the Brazilian communist party and used to hold the party's meetings in their family home. She remembered having her father engage her in the party's social activities such as midnight food distribution to the homeless (Miranda, 2008a). These activities may have been a foundation for her interest in management, politics and leadership work, although she does not mention the link herself. Yet, in both interviews I carried out with Miranda she admitted that she could not avoid but to be political. In this sense she sees her work as a gradual support of autonomy and leadership empowerment of different social classes - from homeless and lower class communities to artists and business entrepreneurs.

Miranda's dance tuition began with classical ballet at an early age. Later she also developed an interest in theatre. She believes that this interest is a result of her early engagement with literature and politics. Responding to her classical ballet training she was accepted to join the Joffrey Ballet in New York. It is most likely that Miranda also explored other dance practices such as postmodern dance, whose influences are evident in her artistic practices described in her book (Miranda, 2008b: 85–114). In fact, a milestone in Miranda's life was her discovery of the DNB where Irmgard Bartenieff was a teacher. Under Bartenieff's tutelage she completed a CMA certification programme. While in New York she also pursued a BA in Psychology from the New York State University, and she highlighted the fact that she completed a psychology internship in hospitals in New York. However, she did not give further details of these activities.

Miranda admitted that she has always been interested in the semantics of movement. She discloses her conceptual framework when she highlights that throughout her early training, she always sought for the 'linguistics' of movement. This incited her to investigate different dance styles to acquire 'vocabulary' (Miranda, 2013). This framework

may have drawn her to discover in Laban's praxis the key for movement literacy. In fact, Laban constantly claimed to be developing movement literacy through both his notation system (Kinetography - see Laban, 1956) and conceptual framework for movement analysis (Effort notation – see Laban and Lawrence, 1947).

Following her sojourn in New York, Miranda established herself back in Brazil in 1977 in Brasilia and later relocated back to Rio de Janeiro. Her first book, *Movimento Expressivo* (Miranda, 1980), was published in the following year. Miranda explains that this publication responded to the need to introduce Laban and Bartenieff to the Brazilian community of performing artists (Miranda 2012i). Yet her second publication, launched almost thirty years later, reveals an overall different character: *Corpo-Espaco* or *Body-Space* (Miranda, 2008b) develops Miranda's scheme for representing body and space within her performance practice. In addition, Miranda mentioned during the interview that she had published a third book *Laban Lead: Leadership as Art* (2008). This book, however, has not been available for purchase or reference<sup>11</sup>.

Miranda has demonstrated a particular interest in having strong institutional ties throughout her career. In 1994 she founded the *Centro Laban-Rio* which gathers her artistic and entrepreneurial activities together. Although the Centre had a physical space in its early days, it no longer does so. The website<sup>12</sup> contains brief biographical information of the members of the Centre but does not give details regarding courses and activities offered by the institution.

Since her first trip to the USA, Miranda has maintained regular visits to the country. She appears to have established a close relationship with the LIMS as in 2000 she became Head of the Arts and Culture programme of the Institute. She later took the position of its general director. Meanwhile in Rio de Janeiro Miranda was invited to launch the municipal Choreographic Centre<sup>13</sup> in 2004, where she became artistic director until 2008.

When analysing Miranda's discourse I noticed that her background of holding administrative positions marks her overall speech and the way she expresses herself

verbally. For example, she is particularly proud of her achievements when considering developments in the dance community of Rio de Janeiro. Also, during an interview (Przewodowski, 2008) she mentions that one of her projects as artistic director of the *Centro Coreográfico* resulted in 46% of the dancers finding a work placement, which she considers a noteworthy achievement. Furthermore, in our conversations she highlighted the social achievements of her artistic work involving communities (Miranda, 2013). Overall I would see Miranda as she defines herself: as an artist and cultural leader who promotes awareness of the importance of sensibility and the arts in the consolidation of cities and enterprises (Cidade Criativa, 2014). And I agree that her discourse (in Cabral, 2012) thus reflects her professional positions.

### **3. Laban Praxis in Brazilian Lives/Work**

#### **3.1 The Practitioner's Introduction to Laban Praxis**

In my discussion of the genealogy of Laban praxis in Brazil (Chapter Three) I revealed how the discourse was transmitted from one individual to the other or from a master to a disciple. The practices of the artists investigated in this chapter reveal a similar structure. Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda were all introduced to Laban's discourse through a dance studio environment. This reflected a master-pupil or student-teacher relationship, in either private studios (as in Rengel's experience) or in a major institution (such as the certification programme completed by Miranda and Fernandes).

Fernandes had her first contact with Laban's movement principles during her visual arts BA at National University of Brasilia (UNB) with Eliana Carneiro. She came to experience Laban practices again at NYU in Laban-specific classes led by Ann Axtmann in 1992. Fernandes revealed her immediate identification with the discourse: 'it had everything to do with me' (Fernandes, 2012a). This implies that Fernandes associated the Laban knowledge with her own existing arts, health and therapy background. Laban praxis

not only integrated what she already knew but also allowed her to develop new connections between academic research and movement (and later somatic) practice. Today she declares: 'it completes me in all my possibilities' (Fernandes, 2008a).

Fernandes remembers that in 1993 Nina Robinson re-introduced her to Laban praxis through AM technique. Fernandes' understanding of AM as a 're-introduction' to Laban praxis demonstrates how she sees that AM is part of the heritage of Laban's discourse (detailed in Chapter Six). In the same year Fernandes enrolled in the Certification programme of the LIMS to specialise in LMA. She reflects that AM and LMA were both part of the same process of developing her mastery of movement. In fact, she admits that 'I only accessed the Laban System due to the AM' (Fernandes, 2012a). From these experiences she recognised that Laban praxis is based on working principles that are present in different methods and practices, and she began to trace them down from those early days.

Like Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda also asserted instant identification with Laban-related practices. Rengel came to discover Laban praxis through Maria Duschenes who immediately became Rengel's master for the following 25 years. It was in 1977 that Rengel started to attend Duschenes' classes in São Paulo, following the reference of a friend. Rengel discovered that the type of practice Duschenes was proposing 'stimulated thought' and led her to understand that 'thinking is movement, that the body and mind are one single thing' (Rengel, 2012a). This understanding is reflected throughout Rengel's work (Rengel, 2007b). Rengel found Laban praxis, from Duschenes' perspective, both enchanting and liberating. Apparently this is because Rengel was able to easily associate the discourse with her teaching activities (Rengel, 2012a). She emphasises that it was from the moment she met Maria Duschenes that Laban began to permeate everything that she does (*idem*).

Likewise, after being introduced to Laban praxis by Linda Goldman, Miranda immediately enrolled in the Effort-Shape training programme Certification at the DNB in New York (Miranda, 2008a). It was on this programme that Miranda met Bartenieff, who became her master.<sup>14</sup> Miranda recollects that as soon as she was admitted in the

programme she was so enthusiastic that she interrupted her Psychology BA in order to devote herself full time to Laban praxis training (Miranda, 2013). This highlights her instant identification with the knowledge, as well as the long-term engagement she has been establishing with Laban's discourse.

All three practitioners have demonstrated an access to Laban praxis through corporeal practice. Their testimonies reveal that the discourse was passed from a teacher to a student by means of dance and movement classes or in workshop environments. This framework illustrates that each practitioner referred back to their tutor who introduced the discourse to them as well as incited them to initiate a quest to expand their individual knowledge (as discussed in Chapter Four). These master-student encounters demonstrate how, in each of the three cases, Laban praxis functioned as a system of knowledge that was introduced to each subject and unravelled according to the learning circumstances available and the practitioners' original background.

### **3.2 Laban Praxis Enhancing Individual Lives**

The testimonies that I collected from Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda show that Laban practice is adjustable and that in each case it matched each individual's framework (body type and ability) in such a way that it 'makes sense' (Fernandes, 2012a). For Fernandes, this means that 'any body' can practice Laban's movement principles. This characteristic distinguishes Laban from other dance styles such as classical ballet and modern dance techniques where bodies need to adapt to a specific working pace and, arguably, to fit into its aesthetic or movement forms.

With this flexibility of form and style, Fernandes, who comes from a non-dancer background, believes that Laban was an 'opportunity... where I saw that in those classes everyone was dancing... I found that I could dance at thirty years of age and that I can keep on dancing' (Fernandes, 2008a). She argues that Laban practice is not based on a

technique or aesthetics, but is rather structured around people's vital needs, or what Fernandes describes as 'internal impulses' (discussed in Chapter Six). Rengel agrees and claims that '[h]e [Laban] introduced terminologies that are so overarching that they are able to cover all that which is necessary to speak about movement' (Rengel, 2008a).

In both cases, the ways in which Laban praxis was folded into their practices reveals their initial inclination towards the discourse and its inclusiveness. If one saw in Laban the opportunity to become a movement artist (in Fernandes' case) the other found in Laban the possibility and language to express herself and develop a kind of literacy for her activities (in Rengel and Miranda's cases). In fact both Rengel and Miranda were strongly influenced by Laban's interest in movement literacy. While Rengel took an educational pathway Miranda took an artistic one.

In other words, Laban praxis was a liberation factor for these Brazilian artists. For Fernandes the discourse proved itself inclusive as it was 'through Laban' that she was 'able to dance' (Fernandes, 2012a). She discovered its versatility when she realised it could be used for everything: 'wherever I go I can use it' and this gives Fernandes the possibility to reach out to different fields such as education, therapy and art (Fernandes, 2008a).

Although the apparent inclusiveness of Laban praxis, Miranda asserts that it is 'just a field and it belongs to the people'. With this statement Miranda suggests that Laban praxis is an open source. She explains that Laban's field of movement studies is not about Laban, but rather it is about embodiment or 'incarnation' (Miranda, 2008b). However, she points out that: 'the embodiment of today cannot be the embodiment of 1956 or 1936' (Miranda, 2013). Miranda's perspective demonstrates her own physical and theoretical understanding of Laban praxis and its adaptability to bodies and contexts in space and time.

These standpoints show that individual practitioners embody and embed the discourse into their own activities and beliefs, so that it becomes part of what they do, responding to their own –contemporary – artistic, pedagogical or research interests. For

instance, Laban praxis brought together Fernandes's thinking and background practices (of arts therapy, visual arts and health). At the same time she noticed that the discourse itself already held its own interdisciplinary associations. This is evident in the assortment of Fernandes's publications where she takes Laban praxis as the thread that weaves her activities and research (see Chapter Six Section I). The combination of Fernandes, Miranda and Rengel's statements highlight the status of Laban praxis as a 'technique of the body' (Mauss, 1973) or a skill which is embodied and shaped by individual practitioners.

My own experience with Laban praxis (exercising it through systematic practice and theoretical investigation) allowed me to access its embodied knowledge. When I began to engage systematically with Laban and Preston-Dunlop's Choreological practice I noticed how my choreographic and analytical skills were enhanced. My awareness of how I was moving in relation to the use of space (Choreutics), dynamics - Effort and rhythm phrasing (Eukinetics) and the relationships established within my own body parts and with objects in space, were overly attuned. Furthermore I began to recognise my movement behaviour patterns. Responding to this recognition I began to explore the neglected spaces and dynamics of my movement. After a while I noticed an increase in the diversity of movements achieved, which also allowed me to broaden the scope of my personal expression and analytical capacities.<sup>15</sup>

In short I recognise how Laban's movement principles are now embedded in my daily life and creative activities, in similar ways to the practitioners I have studied. An example rests in my studio practice where, after noticing a constant use of the dimensional movements (which happen following the scaffolding of the octahedron - up/down, right/left and front/back dimensions), I decided to explore the diagonals, which I seldom use during creative movement explorations. Similar experimentations happened with the observation of the dynamics that are recurrent in my dance improvisations. After observing a reoccurrence of a specific pattern I voluntarily practiced opposing dynamics aiming to enhance my ability and possibilities of movement. Familiarising myself with unusual

movement patterns, I recognised a scope of expressive possibilities to my dance practice/expression as well as my ability to analyse the movement of the other.

These discoveries and movement awareness that I developed through a systematic practice of Laban praxis seem to be analogous to the ones described by Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda. Thus, my personal experiences allowed me to relate to their testimonies that revealed how Laban praxis produced a shift in their lives and careers. Their narratives hint at the extent of this shift and how it affected their development as performing arts professionals and pedagogues. Hence, I understand their testimonies through my own experience of having similar shift of understanding of human movement.

### **3.3 Integration of Laban Praxis into Individual Background**

As mentioned above, Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda integrated Laban praxis into their established practices. With her Nursing degree, visual arts and arts therapy background, Fernandes took Laban praxis to weave health, arts and therapy together, applying it directly to her academic research. For instance when attempting to explain her current research and performance practice she states that 'it has to do with my Nurse education, with the vision of the integration and well being of people'. This reveals the roots of Fernandes' inclination to therapy and wellbeing supporting her artistic research.

When I experienced (participated in) her teaching and environmental performances I noticed that my own body and movement limitations were never an issue. In this regard, Fernandes does not force her students to achieve specific movement forms, participate in the exercises or even attend her classes. She clarifies: 'I am not willing propose a course which will force people to attend by marking their attendance, applying exams and failing people ... I do not use the register. The ones who don't want they don't need to attend [classes]' (Fernandes, 2012a). Through her behaviour Fernandes demonstrates



her inclusive practice, accepting the willingness of the students to participate or not in her classes.

In Fernandes's classes (both at undergraduate and postgraduate level) she gives the students the opportunity to express themselves freely (notes from the field). However, this freedom could be misunderstood as a disinterest on her part on the student's movement. For example, while observing her classes I noticed that Fernandes gives an instruction for a type of movement (involving a dynamics or space pattern). Yet, she does not intervene to correct the students' embodiments. Rather she allows them to explore their own possibilities even when they deviate from the instruction given (notes from the field). Her attitude suggests an inclusion of the student's own capacities.

On a different note, Rengel already had an established teaching practice and a career as a performer when she met Duschenes and was introduced to Laban praxis. Thus her encounter with Laban praxis fed directly into her original teaching skills. Similar to Fernandes, Rengel noticed that what she was learning from Duschenes could be associated with all other practices/body techniques she had previously experienced. Laban's discourse has caused such an impact on Rengel's professional life that she admits that 'I ended up working with his legacy in almost everything I do' (Rengel, 2012a). Nonetheless her pedagogical enquiries also shaped her approach to Laban's discourse. She recognised that Laban's discourse provided literacy for what she had been attempting to verbalise to her students since her early teaching.

Rengel found in Laban praxis the access to express her embodied and teaching knowledge. An attempt to express this access was materialised through Rengel's *Laban Dictionary* (Rengel, 2003). The publication reveals the synthesis of Laban praxis into Rengel's own background as dance teacher and practitioner aiming to integrate body and mind, word and movement. This Dictionary responded to her impetus of 'putting it into words all that I had experienced with Duschenes' (Rengel, 2012a). The contents and function of the publication are unpacked in Chapter Six, Section II in the discussion of the details of Rengel's work.

To conclude, the ways in which Fernandes and Rengel have integrated Laban praxis into their individual framework demonstrates the versatility of the discourse. In fact it is easy to grasp how Laban praxis has illuminated a variety of practices worldwide, which is not unusual for the Laban related scholarship (see Preston-Dunlop and Sayers, 2011; Salter, 1980).

The analogy of these testimonies with other international experiences related to Laban praxis illustrates that the discourse itself demonstrates an inherent property of matching and supporting a wide range of practices. This means that the Brazilian practitioners have exposed an in depth understanding of the discourse as they repeat a recurring pattern from the overall field of Laban-studies.

### **Conclusion: Brazilian Laban-Practitioners**

Having considered the cohort of Brazilian Laban-practitioners introduced in Chapter Three, I chose to detail the background of Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda. This is because, as revealed throughout this chapter, these practitioners constitute typical examples of individuals who have acquired Laban praxis and merged it with their established backgrounds. In addition, their work has been contributing to the dissemination of Laban's discourse in the country (as I have explained in Chapter Four, section 4). These practitioners are not only the authors of the most commercialised Laban-related publications in Brazil, but they have also been introducing a large number of artists/students to Laban's movement principles. Their work could be taken as the main reference of Laban-related studies in Brazil in the initial decades of the twenty first century.

The professional positions of these practitioners also hint at their significance to the Brazilian field of movement studies. Fernandes is a professor on one of the major Theatre undergraduate and postgraduate courses of the country; Rengel is a lecturer on the most traditional HE dance course in Brazil; Miranda is a key reference in contemporary dance

practice as well as in Laban/Bartenieff studies in the country. Another reason for the selection of these practitioners was the national and international relevance of their work (which I detail throughout Chapter Six).

The experience I developed with the practitioners was crucial for the organisation of their historical timelines and relationship with Laban praxis. My practice of embodied ethnography and co-existence (discussed in Chapter Two, section 4) with the practitioners allowed an intimate relationship to develop with Fernandes and Rengel. It also evidenced the disparity with my narrative of Miranda, with whom I did not develop a co-existence experience. These discrepancies disclose the empathetic epistemology that guided my narration throughout this chapter and also across Chapter Six.

In the narratives of the three artists I outlined the different ways in which they were introduced to Laban praxis, revealing that all three practitioners operated within a repertoire (Taylor, 2003) transmission of knowledge. This suggests that, despite the large written archive of Laban's heritage, the experience of the practitioners leads their acquisition and embodiment of Laban praxis and its embeddedness to become a habitus (Mauss, 1973) or part of their operative framework.

Generally speaking, the practitioners introduced in this chapter are of great importance to the Brazilian field of Laban studies. Their trajectories can be taken as representations of the diversity of encounters with Laban praxis. I now continue to explore the specificity of the work developed by these individuals, thus laying the grounds for specific insights associated with Laban's discourse in Brazil.

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#### Notes to Chapter Five:

<sup>1</sup> Remembering that Laban developed his body of knowledge out of an impetus to understand human motion and its consequent expression. He systematised a scholarship that would provide a (scientific) literacy to human movement expression and behaviour.

<sup>2</sup> I am not excluding the fact that in the past other practitioners were also important for the dissemination of Laban praxis in Brazil. In fact, I have already spoken of the lineage of people who disseminated Laban knowledge in the country. Some of these people are no longer available (such as Maria Duschenes) and others, who I do not believe are less important, have not systematised working frameworks that combine theory and practice (such as Cybele Cavalcanti). For this reason,

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I chose practitioners who were available, agreed to participate in my research and also present a substantial body of theoretical work, which approaches Laban's own epistemological framework of merging theory and practice.

<sup>3</sup> The distance between Lençóis and Salvador, the capital of the state of Bahia is around 400km and took me 6 hours of travelling by coach.

<sup>4</sup> In Brazil, it is common in academia for scholars to stay for long periods employed in the same University, especially the public ones. The fact that the most important universities in Brazil are State or Federal funded allow a high job stability, which encourages the academics to develop their careers in a single institution.

<sup>5</sup> Sant'Anna (2007) has used Lehman's concept of post-dramatic theatre to attempt to discuss Fernandes's practice in a non-classificatory manner, highlighting the characteristics of 'multi' and 'post' in her works.

<sup>6</sup> According to the Anthropologist Pierre Verger, the *Orixás* are entities that come from African religions (taken to Brazil by the African slaves) and characterise themselves for being a 'divine ancestral', which establishes links that grant itself control over certain forces of nature (such as wind, thunder, water); certain living abilities (hunting, fishing); or even the mastery of the properties of plants and natural resources. As a divine ancestral it has the capacity of momentarily incarnating back in the body of one of its descendants (through possession rituals). The *Orixá* is seen as a pure immaterial force which can only be perceived when embodied in a human being (Verger, 2000: 13–14).

<sup>7</sup> In Brazil, it is not common to find multi-culturalism as in the city of London. It is not common to have affordable restaurants that offer food from other countries (apart from larger cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro). Despite the cultural and racial mixture present in the Brazilian culture, they have mostly merged into what is known as Brazilian culture and the individual characteristics of each culture are no longer evident.

<sup>8</sup> Lençóis is a small town of 10,300 habitants.

<sup>9</sup> Fernandes spends her time travelling back and forth between her countryside house in Lençóis, which is a small town located inside the national park of *Chapada Diamantina* in the state of Bahia, and the city of Salvador (distance of 400km), capital of the state of Bahia, where the Federal University of Bahia - UFBA is located (where she is part of the faculty of the Theatre School)

<sup>10</sup> The LABAN 2008 was an artistic-academic event organised by Regina Miranda and her *Laban Rio* institution as part of a series of events which were happening around the world (England - Dartington Hall and London; Slovakia - Bratislava; United States - New York) to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Rudolf Laban's death.

<sup>11</sup> References to this publication were found only on Miranda's personal website: [www.reginamiranda.com/workshops-publications](http://www.reginamiranda.com/workshops-publications) (accessed in 21/01/2014). She did not offer me a copy of the publication. She explained that she only makes this publication available to people who follow her leadership courses, as she fears her work being taken as a theory separated from its practice. Interestingly this is an opposite perspective of other Laban-practitioners who decided to publish and make available their books in order to secure an understanding of their practices. An example of this action is Warren Lamb who, according to his pupil Eden Davies (during informal conversation in May, 2015), strove to make available his last book as it would support the understanding of his methodological proposal.

<sup>12</sup> The website of the centre [www.centrolaban-rj.org](http://www.centrolaban-rj.org) (access 14/03/2014).

<sup>13</sup> The Choreographic Centre is the first of the kind in the country. It was established in the city of Rio de Janeiro, which has a strong culture of dance practice (having the first National Opera and Ballet company of the country). The Centre is sponsored by Rio de Janeiro municipality, configuring a public enterprise. Moreover the studios are open to the community and are all free of charge.

<sup>14</sup> Irmgard Bartenieff was initially connected to the DNB as the responsible for the Effort-Shape course offered by the institution. In 1978 she decided to open her own institution, the Laban Institute of Movement Studies, which later became the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies (LIMS, 2009).

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<sup>15</sup> I noticed an enhancement of my analytical capacities both in movement and behaviour analysis. For example this was revealed in the essay written for the final assessment of the SDCS course (access through the following link: [http://issuu.com/poeticmotions/docs/mscialom\\_analysis\\_of\\_2\\_d\\_papaioanno/1](http://issuu.com/poeticmotions/docs/mscialom_analysis_of_2_d_papaioanno/1)) as well as while helping other fellow researchers of the Dance Department with their own movement analysis for their thesis.

## **Chapter Six: Brazilian Laban Praxis**

Having introduced the lives and training background of three prominent Brazilian artists I now examine the work that they have been developing in relation to Laban's discourse. I have chosen to examine the work of these practitioners by relating the way they address Laban praxis and develop unique *modus operandi* within Laban's original epistemology. From this standpoint I situate the practices of Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda within the broader historical and cultural context of the Laban studies field. This analysis details how each practitioner organised their practices, integrating their own background and developing distinct frameworks for researching, teaching, choreographing and leading activities related to Laban praxis.

The ways in which each practitioner constructed their praxis in relation to Laban's discourse places them in a distinct standpoint in relation to the general field of Laban Studies. On the one hand, Miranda clearly indicates that she went to look for contemporary theories that would update Laban praxis and conceptualise her ongoing theatrical activities. On the other, Fernandes and Rengel demonstrate interdisciplinary pathways that merge Laban knowledge with contemporary scholarship to inform and develop research and pedagogy. While Fernandes developed concepts that she investigates alongside her own artistic process situated within LMA systematics, Rengel used Laban's discourse to illuminate further pedagogical possibilities. Despite their disparities, I would suggest that these three approaches to Laban's discourse all offer innovative artistic, research and pedagogical praxis involving Laban's scholarship.

For the purpose of this analysis I break down this chapter into three distinct sections, which are then interlinked in the conclusion. Section I relates to Ciane Fernandes and her use of Dance Theatre, AM and somatic practices to ground an artistic and research enterprise in relation to Laban praxis. Section II examines Lenira Rengel's work and her research into communication and cognitive science to inform and support dance pedagogy. Finally, Section III analyses the themes of Regina Miranda's work and her

choreographic and cultural leadership activities informed by Laban praxis. Despite the fact that these are presented as distinct case studies, the three sections share the common basis of Laban's epistemology and movement principles.

## **Section I: Art and/as Research**

### **Ciane Fernandes**

Fernandes has developed her career through a path that sustains her constant artistic and academic creative flux: as her life evolves, so do her research interests. She has developed a great number of reflexive case studies that feed into her research and original professional activities, where she threads Laban scholarship together with a variety of disciplines. In this way she combines theatrical, creative, social, political, philosophical and scientific realms. This suggests that Laban praxis becomes the source of multiple connections and interactions within her individual scholarship.

Fernandes locates herself (and her work) within three strands of Laban practices: dance theatre, Mary Whitehouse's AM and Irmgard Bartenieff's LMA framework<sup>1</sup>. Thus she insists that dance theatre encompasses the scope of her work, maintaining that she works with dance theatre 'in its most varied aspects and applications' (Fernandes, 2012a). For Fernandes this offers a particular frame for her research and at the same time distances it from a pure desk-based work stereotype:

I'd rather say [that I do] dance theatre... because if we say movement analysis ... the person thinks that you are sitting in front of the video, that you stay in front of the computer analysing something. I do this as well. But first of all it is dance theatre. Even in analysis there is always an aesthetic position of things (Fernandes, 2012a).

Fernandes's voice reveals that she chose dance theatre as a representation of her practice in order to include an aesthetic dimension to her work, which she admits that LMA does not necessarily offer (Fernandes, 2008c). From my own experience with the strands of LMA and Choreological Studies, for example, I had the same impression as Fernandes: that LMA does not necessarily offer an aesthetic commodity. While there are no publications on this matter, it seems to be the topic of concurring discussions amongst practitioners.

To cope with the scope of her domestic and professional activities Fernandes merges them all. For example, Fernandes runs two homes: one in Salvador and the other in Lençois. At the same time she nurses her son and manages her professorship at the UFBA, teaching undergraduate and postgraduate courses as well as undertaking academic administrative duties. She is also a research consultant for the Brazilian National Research Council (CNPq) and consultant for a number of Brazilian research journals. In addition she keeps up to date with national and international academic theatre and dance conferences. Fernandes deals with this range of activities by combining them all; in her words, 'to survive we need to integrate, we need to integrate, otherwise you die' (Fernandes, 2012a).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, integration is a key topic in Fernandes's scholarship. It is most likely that her use of the term came from the work of the Laban practitioner Peggy Hackney (2010) as she often makes reference to Hackney's texts. Hackney proposes that integration is a compulsory stage of a person's development where life and living polarities (dualism) are integrated in a 'lively interplay' (Hackney, 2010: 34, 214). Hackney uses the figure of '8' as a representation of her concept. Fernandes does the same, even though she adopts the figure as the topology of the Moebius strip. It is most likely that the use of the figure of 8 and the Moebius strip as a 'connecting tool' (Fernandes, 2008c: 6) came from Laban's epistemology. Yet, Laban did not achieve this conceptualisation. He introduced the figure as a 'lemniscate'<sup>2</sup> (Laban, 1966: 85) where the form's outer and inner sides are continuously integrated. Fernandes' scholarship though reveals that her interest in the Moebius strip is not only a reference to



Laban and Hackney, but is also associated with her research into the theory of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, as evidenced in her texts (Fernandes, 2008c: 5; 1995). For example, while describing one of her choreographic processes Fernandes quotes Lacan to develop the notion that:

...time on the moebius strip was neither linear nor cyclical. Connecting the two poles—past and future—inverting one of them, created a retroactive time, in which the future transforms the past while reconstructing it in the present (Lacan, 1988 p.157). (Fernandes, 2008c: 6).

This polarity is what Fernandes believes to be the key to the ‘dramaturgy of contrasts’, a key concept of her dance theatre framework. With the topological property of the Moebius strip in mind, Fernandes organised a ‘choreographic methodology that integrates personal experience and aesthetic results’ (*idem*: 3), which she associates with Laban’s own dance theatre practice.

## **1. Dance Theatre**

Fernandes’ particular understanding of dance theatre is related to ‘internal impulses<sup>3</sup>’ which, according to her, belong to all faculties of a person’s life (Fernandes, 2012a). In fact, internal impulses frame her personal life too as described earlier. To situate herself within a dance theatre tradition, Fernandes has developed a definition for the concept as an ‘open aesthetics’, focussed on human beings, their needs and inter-relationships (Fernandes, 2012c), all of which are based on movement principles or ‘principles in motion’. This means that such principles can be adapted according to stories and localities; they develop themselves ‘transculturally and are constantly renewed, present in all continents, in dialogue with other hybrid forms’ (Fernandes, 2012c: 78). In fact, Fernandes has engaged with dance theatre and its principles throughout her career,

exploring its interrelationship with memory (Fernandes, 2012d), choreography and dance making (Fernandes, 2010), AM (Fernandes, 2008c, 2012b), therapy (Fernandes, 2013a), and pedagogy (Fernandes, 2012e). It is beyond the scope of this analysis to discuss the premises and foundations of *tanztheater* which has already been done by Parscht-Bergson (2013), Cimenhaga (2013), Muller (2013), Ferguson (1989), and Sanchez-Colberg (1992) among others. However, to position Fernandes's dance theatre in relation to the genealogy of the concept I briefly outline here some of the debates in the scholarship.

Maletic (1987: 9) holds that the source of the term dance theatre came from the title of Laban's first dance company - *Tanzbuhne Laban*. Dance theatre was also the name that Laban gave to the scope of his theatrical dance practice to contrast with his community/movement choir practices (Preston-Dunlop, 2013b). During and after the Second World War the term lost its popularity and disappeared from the German dance scene. Susan Manning and Melissa Benson (1986: 30) clarify that the term dance theatre or *tanztheater* reappeared in Germany in the 1960's through the work of the German choreographers Pina Bausch, Reinhild Hoffmann, and Susanne Link. Furthermore, while researching the roots of *tanztheater*, the choreographer and scholar Sanchez-Colberg (1992) found its principles emerging from the German *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art). These principles were the following: synthesis as a guiding creative principle; dialectical attitude towards inner and outer reality; organic attitude towards the process of creation; emphasis on emotions; anti-mimesis attitude towards art; layering of meaning; development of experience; and dramaturgy via the body (Sanchez-Colberg, 1992: 85–86).

Despite *Tanztheater's* distinct principles it can also be associated with the *Ausdruckstanz* heritage, as both originated in Laban-related practices (Manning and Benson, 1986). To consider *Ausdruckstanz* as the precedent of *tanztheater* aesthetics is, however, to 'elevate expression over form' (*idem*: 30). This means that to assume *Ausdruckstanz* as the access to *tanztheater* is to accept that individual expression had

major importance in relation to an aesthetic form. For example, Marienne Goldberg (1989: 104) recognises that Bausch's *tanztheater*:

could be considered a combination and revival of the *Ausdruckstanz* tradition of Mary Wigman, Rudolf Laban or Kurt Jooss in which "inner necessity", a kind of emotional kinesthetic-honesty was considered the choreographer's most important resource (*idem*).

It is with this same notion of 'kinesthetic-honesty' outlined by both Goldberg and Sanchez-Colberg that Fernandes constructed her dance theatre practice. During the first ten years of her professional artistic and academic practice Fernandes focused on exploring the boundaries of dance theatre specifically in relation to the experience with different cultures. This means that her main creative impulse came from her cultural sensitivity (Fernandes, 2004a, 2013b) and contact with a variety of cultures in either their native environment (such as India, Thailand and Greece) or in multi-cultural gatherings typical of large metropolitan centres (such as New York, Berlin and London). In fact, the beginning of her cultural sensitivity seems to be the period in which Fernandes lived in New York City<sup>4</sup>. To illustrate Fernandes's dance theatre and cultural sensitivity in her life and work, I use her piece *Ubergang*.

*Ubergang* (2002) is one of Fernandes's most famous solo pieces. It is a combination of a number of smaller scenes and acts from her multi-cultural creative process: 'the intercultural experiences of a *latina*<sup>5</sup> in Berlin' (Fernandes, 2014b: 133). *Ubergang* in its complete structure lasts up to 80 minutes and is composed of 18 scenes that were developed over a period of three years. Thus there are also smaller pocket versions where Fernandes readily adapts the piece according to the space and time of the event where she is commissioned to perform (notes from informal conversation). In fact, the adaptation of movement into a specific environment (time and space) is a recurring strategy in most of her compositions. Fernandes herself describes *Ubergang* as an 'open project' (Fernandes, n.d.) which developed as she moved through different cultural realms.

The combination of different media on the stage of *Übergang* creates a *bricolage* of stimuli, achieved through a number of techniques: the blending of different sounds (musical, spoken, recordings from the environment); frequent changes of costumes on the stage; frequent changes of movement styles; and the combination of movement, sound and video footage. Together, these procedures intend to address different cultural models built out of the image of the Latino. Then, the *bricolage* that weaves together her experiences creates an apparent schizophrenic encounter. This is because there is no obvious relationship between the scenes. Fernandes's array of media and symbols reveals her personal relationship with culture, identity and clichés, gathered in a theatrical setting.

In analysing the structure and content of *Übergang* I find similarities with Pina Bausch's compositional structures. Whereas Fernandes uses her personal experiences and memories of intercultural engagements, Bausch used her dancers' experience to compose the theatrical scenes (Fernandes, 2000a: 42). While Bausch explores the arbitrary and the 'non response of the sign' (*idem*: 32), weaving together scenes that do not directly relate to each other, Fernandes builds a 'patchwork quilt'<sup>6</sup> of personal experiences that apparently are not interrelated, composed of 'points of connection where different tendencies meet' (Fernandes, 2004a: 351).

In addition to the association with Bausch's composition, Fernandes's creative choices are also linked to Laban's own understanding of dance theatre. Fernandes outlines that dance theatre was initially identified by Laban as being composed out of his 'inter-artistic method of improvisation Tanz-Ton-Wort-Plastik' (Fernandes, 2012c: 76). Sanchez-Colberg (1992: 93) adds that 'Laban envisioned a *tanztheater* which brought together the aesthetic, the plastic and the spiritual' simultaneously employing dance, sound and speech. In *Übergang*, Fernandes addresses these standpoints simultaneously. The aesthetics includes her analytical process of transformation of the somatic and therapeutic (of her AM improvisations) into rhythmic sequences of movement (Fernandes, 2008c). Her use of the plastic (or visual) is present throughout the piece with an overload of props and costumes. For example, each of the 18 scenes of *Übergang* has its own

costume, set of props and soundtrack. The garments are so detailed that Fernandes has different underwear for every outfit. In contrast she does not work with sophisticated scenarios: apart from her props there is nothing else on the stage. The soundtrack comes from the melange of her own recordings, video footage or even from her live voice (not forgetting that she trained as a lyrical singer). Therefore, *Ubergang* expresses Fernandes' understanding that 'dance theatre deconstructs constructions, definitions, fixed ways of acting, being, thinking' (Fernandes, 2004b: 375). These are located 'in between' theatre and dance, acting as the 'connecting tissue' of the 'internal and external corporeal structures' (*idem*). These statements evidence Fernandes's understanding that dance theatre connects internal impulses with external forms accomplished by the body in motion.

In regards to Fernandes' movement style, her use of LMA has been the starting point not only in *Ubergang* but in all of her performances. She takes Laban's movement principles (Choreutics and Eukinetics) to guide the embodiment of shapes, spatial forms and dynamics. In fact Fernandes has already formally conceptualised her use of LMA in her choreographic practice (Fernandes, 2006b: 4–5, 2007b).

I experienced Fernandes's choreographic procedures during a workshop she held in 2010, where she demonstrated how she learnt to dance (Bharatanatyam) through LMA technique. The activity focused on having the attendees experience basic Bharatanatyam moves through the embodiment of movement/body shaping and dynamics rather than the style's specific forms. By the end of the workshop we (the participants) were dancing basic Bharatanatyam sequences with the focus entirely on movement qualities and patterns, not on the dance form. From this experience I trace Fernandes's analytical technique in *Ubergang* which reveals her accurate performance of different styles of dance without going through long-term training (usually required in classical dance forms). Fernandes' method and apprenticeship is so efficient that in 2003 she was invited to perform alongside her Bharatanatyam dance master Rajyashree Ramesh on a tour in India.

With this method Fernandes retrieves and embodies movement qualities/patterns and cultural behaviours of Other cultures, which I understand as a type of anthropological

movement analysis<sup>7</sup>. Yet Fernandes generalises her analytical activity to encompass not only Other cultural manifestations but also her own dancing. She entitled her analytical method as 'Laban Moving Analysis', which derives from the original Laban Movement Analysis (Fernandes, 2006a: 350), as well as 'Connecting Laban Analysis' or an analysis *co-movente*, translated to English as *co-motion* analysis. These reflect her technique of concomitantly observing/analysing and reproducing what is observed, and at the same time depicting the ways in which movement happens spatially and dynamically in order to (re)create movement phrases<sup>8</sup>.

Fernandes' makes particular use of her co-motion analysis to depict patterns from her AM improvisation sessions. Her use of AM to develop movement material that is analysed and used in her dance theatre pieces is, nevertheless, similar to the use of improvisation as a choreographic tool in dance composition (Kloppenbergh, 2010; Lavender and Predock-Linnell, 2001). Carter (2000: 182) explains that one of the senses of improvisation is to be 'process of spontaneous free movement to invent original movement intended for use in set choreography'. In this sense, it becomes evident that Fernandes' dance theatre operates with a similar framework but using Laban praxis: through co-motion analysis of her AM sessions.

## **2. Authentic Movement as a Creative Framework**

After claiming that what she does is dance theatre, Fernandes expands the scope of her practice through AM and Laban/Bartenieff somatic practice (Fernandes, 2012a). Again she reports on the importance of AM to materialise (her) Laban practice, emphasising that without AM Laban practice would be incomplete (Fernandes, 2012a). As introduced in Chapter Four (section 1), historically the AM method stemmed from *Ausdruckstanz*. Mary Whitehouse, the creator of the practice, was a student of Mary Wigman in Dresden and also part of the cast of dancers in Jooss's dance company (Frank, 1972; Wallock, 1981). Interestingly, Whitehouse later became a pioneer in dance therapy.

Janet Adler (2002), a long time AM practitioner, suggests that the term Authentic Movement emerged from the discourse of the dance critic John Martin in the 1930's while speaking of Wigman's dances. According to Martin, Wigman's dance was characterised by a movement form which emerged not from intellectual planning but from feeling through<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, the lineage that traces AM back to Laban praxis is relevant for Fernandes, as it reinforces her sense of belonging within Laban's discourse. Yet, like other scholars, Fernandes has questioned the name of the method. When translating the term AM to Portuguese, Fernandes looked for words that would express the actual practice of AM and not a mere translation of the English terminology.<sup>10</sup> She proposed *Movimento Genuíno*, translated as Genuine Movement (Fernandes, 2006a). The alternatives sought by other AM practitioners also express their own experience with the method. The AM practitioner and scholar Eila Goldhahn prefers the term 'Mover-Witness Exchange', while Tina Stromsted (2009: 202) suggests the term 'Movement in Depth' and 'Active Imagination in Movement'. For Stromsted, her terminology reveals the engagement of the practice with Jung's 'kinesthetic mode of experiencing' (Stromsted, 2009: 202; Wyman-McGinty, 2007: 172). Keeping in mind these contemporary proposals for novel terminology for the practice and aiming to maintain a consistency throughout the thesis, I will keep the original terminology to refer to this specific somatic method.

Combining AM's kinesthetic mode of experiencing with environmental activities,<sup>11</sup> Fernandes found in the Asian scholar Shigenori Nagatomo's 'Theory of Attunement' a guiding source to her practice (Nagatomo, 1992). It was around 2010 when the term emerged in her papers and Fernandes began to use it as a theoretical reference and guiding practice. Nagatomo explains that the theory of attunement is to be taken as an 'epistemological paradigm', which he expects to 'serve as an alternative to the so-called mind-body dualism' (Nagatomo, 1992: 179). The term attunement itself should be understood, according to the author, as a descriptive term that acts over the relationship between the modes of epistemological and actional orientation, and between the person and his/her living environment: 'the theory of attunement will argue that the epistemological foundation lies in the bilaterality obtained between the person and his/her living ambiance, while taking into consideration the "depth" (or internal perception) of the

living human body.' (*idem*: 180). Without doubt, the combination of AM principles and Nagatomo's attunement was the point of departure of Fernandes's current ecological performative work (discussed in detail in the next section).

Fernandes has been practicing AM since 1993. I observed that her creative practice (either in the studio, urban landscapes or in nature) follows the AM pattern of allowing her inner states to become outer movement. At first glance Fernandes' work does not evidence AM as her working technique, mainly because when practicing and performing, Fernandes does not follow the method's founding characteristics of moving with the eyes closed and of having a witness alongside the practice (as outlined by Pallaro, 1999)<sup>12</sup>.

In fact, Fernandes has developed unique additions to the AM method, which come from her continuous creative practice with the principles that underlie the method. She defined ten 'Authentic Variations' (Fernandes, 2012e: 6–7), which propose changes or alternatives to the method's practice, facilitating its use in creative works. These include variations in the timing of the sharing of experiences during the duet of mover and witness; changes in the actual function of the witness in the session; interchange of witness and mover without stopping and defining roles; the substitution of the witness by a video camera; association of the AM practice with other somatic practices such as the psychotherapy's Somatic Experiencing<sup>13</sup> (Levine, 1997); the use of questions to trigger the AM improvisation (approaching Fernandes's and Pina Bausch's own creative process)<sup>14</sup>; use of props, costumes and soundscape during AM sessions; the practice of AM sessions in different environments (allowing Nagatomo's attunement to take place); and finally the possibility of combining the above variations. Interestingly, while announcing each of the variations, Fernandes also gives examples of activities and performances where she used the principles, demonstrating that they are not theoretical concepts or hypothetical ideas, but practical tactics of working with internal impulses. From my experience with Fernandes's daily and professional activities I believe that Fernandes maintains these Authentic Variations in her daily life, performance practice (dance theatre), teaching and scholarly activity.



I witnessed Fernandes' use of these Authentic Variations during her volunteer work at the Meadow Meanders installation of Professor Baz Kershaw at the IFTR conference at the University of Warwick in July 2014. During her volunteering slots, Fernandes not only assisted other participants to experience the Meadow but she also developed a number of improvisations in the space, attuning to the paths carved out and the rules set by Kershaw. Fernandes also recorded all these sessions with a camera placed on a standing tripod. She later told me about the different impulses and images she had during those sessions and how the environment led her to embody diverse movement patterns and dynamics. In fact even mystical happenings occurred during these improvisations. For example, during one of the sessions she recalls having had internal impulses towards embodying a four-legged animal with a tail. After the session someone commented that while she was in the meadow a fox approached and wandered around the space. When recollecting this instance to me Fernandes rapidly connected her embodiment with the animal that travelled around the meadow, pointing to this 'mystical' link. Indeed, AM's mysticism has already been highlighted by Adler who argues that 'Authentic Movement has become a source from which both therapeutic and mystical experiences manifest' (Adler, 2002: preface).

Fernandes's acquaintance with the field of somatic practices grew exponentially, becoming visible in the addition of the term to her publications from 2009 on. Besides, somatics has a direct connection with Laban praxis (Huxley, 2010). Martha Eddy explains that Rudolf Laban can be seen as one of the pioneers of the field:

Somatic inquiry was buoyed by this growth of existentialism and phenomenology as well as through dance and expressionism. These developments were moved into diverse frontiers by the groundbreaking work of Freud, Jung and Reich in psychology, Delsarte, Laban and Dalcroze in cultural studies (art, architecture, crystallography, dance and music), Heinrich Jacoby and John Dewey in education, and Edmond Jacobson in medical research (Eddy, 2009: 6).

Inspired by the work of the above pioneer artists and thinkers, an assortment of somatic-based methods was developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Irmgard Bartenieff, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, Sondra Horton Fraleigh, Anna Halprin, Joan Skinner, Nancy Topf, and Elaine Sommers (Eddy, 2009: 16–18). Meehan (2010) adds that somatic approaches to dance training and performance have been expanding across Europe and the United States, and that some of these methods have been recognised as a creative and choreographic tool in dance making. For example, authors such as Cohen (2010) and Meehan (2010) have discussed the use of AM as a method for dance composition in contact improvisation and site specific dance respectively. Along similar lines, Fernandes has been making use of the method in her dance theatre practice, as discussed earlier.

During an informal conversation, Fernandes explained that most of her choreographic practices are initially based on AM movement sessions. In these sessions she follows her refined Authentic Variations, using the video camera as her witness. In fact, she emphasises that the use of the recording device enhances the freedom of the mover to improvise without the observing witness, allowing the mover to expose his/her intimacy, and facilitating a 'medium which multiplies the possibilities of [posterior] reconstruction and experience' (Fernandes, 2011: 123–124). For example, Fernandes discloses that *Ubergang* contains a number of scenes created from hour-long AM sessions reduced to five-minute scenes (notes from informal conversation with Fernandes).

The therapeutic stance of AM practice emerged later in Fernandes' career through the emergence of trauma and therapy themes in her publications. A landmark of Fernandes's association of healing with creative practices resulted in her piece *GEBO - Runa da Parceria* (2010), where she insists that 'therapy and aesthetics are inseparable' (Fernandes, 2011: 121). In *GEBO* the use of Levine's (1997) Somatic Experiencing differentiates the piece from Fernandes's previous works as it reveals the therapeutic aspect of her choreography. *GEBO* was composed over 3 years, through a number of AM sessions addressing her personal circumstances of the period.

In *GEBO* Fernandes integrates LMA and AM with Somatic Experiencing (Fernandes, 2011). LMA functions as a warm-up (Fernandes, 2011: 123), as well as the structure for analysing the improvisation sessions recorded; and AM as the source of movement material. Again, Fernandes used her co-motion analysis to inspect the recordings of her AM session and compose choreographic sequences. Fernandes further describes these sequences as 'open choreographic structures, without counts, but following the rhythmic impulses of the moment of the performance' (Fernandes, 2011: 136). Thus, *GEBO* does not configure a closed set of choreographed movements. Rather it is based on rhythmic structures identified in her AM sessions which she creatively 'plays around with' (notes from informal conversation with Fernandes), while choreographing and performing.

Open structures in choreography are not alien to practices that are structured based on Laban praxis. For example, within the Choreological Studies framework, the scholar and choreographer Sarah Rubidge has explored the composition of what she named as 'open work'. She defines this as a 'dynamic, open ended "work system" constituted by variable movement materials, which are subject to modulation according to a series of authored intersecting systems of rules and behaviours' (Rubidge, 2010: 136). Moreover, Fernandes's and Rubidge's examples support the notion that the 'open work' framework is easily achieved when working with Laban's discourse.<sup>15</sup> The use of principles and not movement forms enables the development of a structure that can be trans-formed throughout its performances, thus maintaining the same movement qualities, patterns, shapes and rhythms. Fernandes conceptualises this property as a 'Crystal Pattern' (Fernandes, 2012e).

To conceptualise Crystal Patterns Fernandes was inspired by Laban's Space Harmony and his study of the properties (geometrical, behaviour, mystical) of the crystalline forms (the five Platonic Solids). Fernandes relates the term Crystal Patterns to a process of cure (or auto-cure), where, during analysis of her AM sessions, she notices a difference between the reoccurring crystallised and the renewed crystal patterns. She explains that during AM sessions specific movement patterns emerge while 'the body sets

off to discover new ways of moving' (notes from informal conversation with Fernandes). She further differentiates the two patterns, proposing that 'crystallized patterns are automatic and repeat themselves as taking us away from consciousness', while Crystal Patterns 'transform themselves in the process of reconstruction, rather than repetition' (Fernandes, 2012e: 7). Crystal Patterns are directly related to the re-patterning process which Fernandes identified in the LMA literature (Bartenieff, 1980; Cohen, 1993; Hackney, 2010; Kestenberg, 1999). The use of the term as a model for recognising and embracing change has shifted her perspective on her movement analysis. Fernandes explains that she focuses on the development of Crystal Patterns to choreograph and simultaneously heal her traumatic experiences (as she did in *GEBO*). In this sense, while describing the process of creating *GEBO*, Fernandes remembers that her focus was on the transfiguration of her trauma rather than in the final aesthetics of a linear dramaturgy:

the movements selected to compose the piece were the ones with greater relevance in the process of transformation of the traumatic symptom, independently of being more or less fluid, tense, fragmented, etc (Fernandes, 2011: 132).

This means that there was no attention towards meaning making nor towards developing a coherent line of communication through the piece. This clearly demonstrates a link of *GEBO* with an *Ausdruckstanz* tradition well as dance theatre. Thus, I argue that the aesthetics of her work not only stand under a dance theatre umbrella, but fluctuate between different strands of Laban praxis.

Fernandes has been developing remarkable (movement) analytical, descriptive and commentary skills which she applies to her performance and academic practice. She tested the combination of these skills when composing *GEBO*, following a process of re-patterning a personal trauma. These skills grant her work academic standards and, I would claim, make her artistic and somatic practices a great example of practice-as-research. It is within this epistemological framework that she advanced to organise and devise a working method for her own lecturing as well as practice, which she called the Somatic-Performative Research.

### 3. The Somatic-Performative Research

Fernandes's Somatic-Performative Research or *Pesquisa Somático Performativa* (SPR) was systematised in 2010 (Fernandes, 2012e) and emerged from the integration of academic research with somatic (internal impulses) and artistic practice, including the premises of dance theatre. Combined together they propose a conceptual framework that emerges from the practice (Fernandes, 2012a) and descend from Laban's epistemology. Fernandes explains: 'historically Laban came before the somatic, and it surpasses the somatic as it includes the artistic' (*idem*).

Since Fernandes's early research she has been exploring ways of merging movement with theoretical conceptualisation to build a flexible and poetic practice. Fernandes points to Brad Haseman's Performative Research (Haseman, 2006) as a milestone in the synthesis of her method. She explains that SPR combines principles of LMA, AM, dance theatre and performance 'in order to constitute a continuous creative process eminently experiential, relational, and integrated, guided by Somatic Attunement, and applied to research (understood as artistic and scientific) and to life'. In fact, the Somatic-Performative takes art as the mediation for 're-creating new possibilities of sensitive realities' (Fernandes, 2014c: 126). The framework takes arts practice as an epistemological transformation of research, where art becomes the object, subject and the modus operandi of the research itself (*idem*: 133).

Fernandes claims that her SPR is both a practice and a theory that supports not only research practice but also artistic processes. Nonetheless, I also see it as a pedagogy that contains her academic and artistic pathways, as Fernandes claims (and I demonstrated in Chapter Five) that she always had an 'academic-artistic pathway' (Fernandes, 2012a):

The academic discourse associated with practice is more flexible, poetic and humoured. The Journalistic critique, more serious and theoretically engaged. The artistic creating associated with theoretical research passes freely between different forms of expression in a critical and contemporary dialogue (Fernandes, 2006a: 389).

In her publications related to SPR, Fernandes reveals her capacity for connecting current scholarship to the Somatic-Performative. An example is the article 'In search of the writing with dance' (Fernandes, 2013c), where Fernandes departs from a question raised by the dance scholar André Lepecki to find a practical way of experimenting and achieving what Lepecki proposes as a 'writing with dance' and not 'about' dance (Lepecki, 2004). Moreover, in this same paper she suggests her SPR as a strategy for research in the field of performing arts, as well as a method to achieve a 'writing with dance' (Fernandes, 2013c: 21). Aligning her work with contemporary academic discourse, this exemplifies the SPR as a framework where theory is practiced to find its possibility of becoming an embodied epistemology.

When considering the epistemological proposition of SPR, and Fernandes's history of engaging with practice and theory in academic research, I would consider her as part of the international pioneers of arts-based research. In fact, Fernandes has been practicing 'performative research' (Haseman, 2006) or Practice-based/Practice-led/Practice-as-research (Nelson, 2013) from her early years in academia, despite not having these labels attached to her earlier work. Evidence for this lies in her doctoral thesis (Fernandes, 1995) and her paper at the conference of the Brazilian association of Theatrical Arts Research - ABRACE (Fernandes, 2000b), both of which expose the way she develops knowledge from her choreographic works. Furthermore, the Postgraduate programme where she is based at the Theatre School of UFBA has also been accounting for performance as part of the research product of Masters and Doctorates in performing arts since 1995 when it was launched. In fact, Fernandes contributed to establish this programme with her entrance in 1996, and has been a key figure in its consolidation.

Fernandes strongly believes that through the Somatic-Performative she is supporting a change of paradigm in academia. Indeed, she published a manifesto (Fernandes, 2014c) that explains the need for a research framework for the arts, where art itself is the method of research. Her manifesto aims at legitimising the 'self-marginalisation and the dichotomy between doing and thinking, manual and intellectual work, with the devaluation of the first and the hegemony of the second' (Fernandes, 2014c: 125). In light of this claim (and supported by Laban's discourse) Fernandes proposes twenty principles of the SPR which she identified alongside her practice and which are nonetheless in 'constant change' (*idem*: 141). The principles are numbered according to Laban's Choreutics shapes (or Platonic solids) and compose the outer points of a person's kinesphere. She relates them as four founding, twelve thematic and four contextual principles. These correspond to a set of eight intersecting points composed of a cube or a combination of two tetrahedrons; and one set of twelve corresponding to the intersection points that compose the icosahedron. All together the twenty points correspond to the vertices of the crystal form of the dodecahedron (Fernandes, 2014c: 140).

Fernandes's association of Laban's Choreutics principles and her SPR offer a clear example of her integration of Laban praxis with current academic research. In addition, I realise that all twenty principles arose from the collection of Fernandes's epistemological frameworks of dance theatre, somatic practices, AM (all descending from Laban praxis) and performative (practice-based) research. She interweaves these frameworks (practices and research paradigms) to enable a method and pedagogy of and for academic enquiry.

For the purpose of this research I chose to engage only with the four axial principles as they represent the scope of her practice and, as the title suggests, support the other sixteen, which I view as unfoldings of the initial four. The four structuring principles of the SPR are: the Art of/in Movement as the axial element, where movement is present as part of both observation/analysis and practice in a research context; the processes and studies in an alive and integrated mode (as Soma - the living and conscious person); the guidance by the impulses of movement (as in the AM practice); performance and 'inter-arts' as an

'(anti-)method', where the artistic - of whatever aesthetics - is the method of working in itself (Fernandes, 2013d: 107–109).

The first principle evidences Fernandes' LMA foundation and announces Laban's discourse as the access point to her method. The second one anticipates her endorsement by the field of somatic practices, thus supporting her background in LMA and AM. The third makes explicit her affinity with Laban praxis and the AM method of dancing and improvising from the internal impulses. The final principle is a step towards contemporary research theory, which distances itself from the disciplinarisation of scholarship to approach the possibility of engaging in transdisciplinary activity. This latter principle extends the transdisciplinary research making beyond problem solving approaches, incorporating new bodies of knowledge that address emerging complexities (Stock and Burton, 2011: 1102). These structuring principles establish a means of merging arts practice and research to configure a unique methodology for academic research. This methodology is currently the premise of Fernandes' activities as well as the Performance Laboratory course that she teaches at UFBA (described in 3.2 of this section).

### **3.1 Art and Research: Attuning with the Environment**

Fernandes's artistic and research activities merge together in her ecological and performance practice (Fernandes, 2012d, 2012e, 2013c, 2013d). During my coexistence with Fernandes in Lençóis I had the chance to practice Fernandes's artistic-research and ecological attunement myself. As part of my investigation of her practice I performed three sessions of improvisation in different environments of the Chapada Diamantina national park in Lençóis. Like Fernandes, I used a video camera with a tripod to register my explorations. These followed the principles of the SPR, especially the twelve thematic principles of attuning with the environment. According to Fernandes these principles are:



Spatial pulsing or inter-relational autonomous intelligences; Somatic Attunement and sensitivity (body as matter and energy experienced from within and with/in the environment, in a dynamic and integrated whole of feeling, sensation, intention, attention, intuition, perception, and interaction); Somatic wisdom or cellular intelligence; Energy, flow and rhythm – stir and stillness - move and being moved; Quantic spacetime, simultaneity and synchronicity; Crystal Patterns, Repatterning and decolonisation; Creativity, unpredictability, and challenge; Connections – fluid borders among differences; Association and sense created through sharing affection and collective support; Internal coherency and/in inter-relation; Somatic-performative image; Incarnated spirituality – sacred soma (Fernandes, 2014c: 140–141)

The results of my experiences were dance explorations that were guided by different spaces I explored and the impulses that emerged from the somatic attunement with the environment. In these sessions I experienced the environmental input in my movement patterns emerging out of the improvisations (which correspondence I only noticed when analysing the videos). In this sense the experiences were significantly different (regarding space and dynamic qualities) from one another suggesting a synchronisation with the environment through somatic sensitivity/perception and allowing the energy to flow inside myself and into the environment. This process incited a cellular intelligence to move and be moved, linking my practice back to Fernandes' SPR thematic principles (notes from analysis of field recordings).

For example, in one of the improvisations I chose a formation of rocks by a calm, narrow river. I placed myself on a flat surface beside a small pool of water. Embraced by a tube of fabric that I found in Fernandes's house (principle of quantic spacetime and synchronicity), I began to move through small (almost invisible) movements with decelerated, indirect and bound flow, attuning with the physical stiffness of the rocks. Gradually these movements became larger, reaching the extremes of my kinespheric space but maintaining the initial dynamic qualities. Attuning with the fabric and the

environment in a dynamic and integrated whole, I also activated all the other 12 thematic SPR principles, while merging with the environment's qualities and energies.

In a different session I chose to explore a waterfall landscape where I danced in and out of the falling water. In this session my upper body movement had a more direct orientation and a rather accelerated pace, allowing a predominance of light and free flow efforts. When analysing the video I noticed how this quality responded to the dynamics of the dropping water, merging with the steadiness and stiffness of the rocks reflected in the grounding quality (bound and heavy) of my lower body. These movements were not anticipated. They simply happened through my attunement with the environment, as Fernandes foresees. When analysing the experience I was surprised by how, without being aware of what was happening, I was once again materialising the principles of Fernandes' SPR.

Similar experiences to the ones I had, have been incorporated in Fernandes's teaching. She consolidated a 'fieldwork experience' into the syllabus of her Performance Laboratory course to allow the students to take their research enquiries outside the studio space. The students have the opportunity to explore Fernandes's ecological attunement and perhaps experience her personal research (of performing AM sessions in interaction with the environment) through their own individual research lens. Thus, the Performance Laboratory course is a systematic way of experiencing Fernandes' SPR.

### **3.2 The SPR in Practice - Experiencing the Performance Laboratory**

As part of my field research I attended Fernandes's Performance Laboratory classes on 29th November and 1st of December 2012, participating together with the students enrolled on the course. Fernandes starts her classes by sitting in a circle with the cohort of students. While introducing the activities, Fernandes explained to the students that the main aim of the workshop was for them to place their research into

motion. To achieve this task, her methodology involved posing specific questions and giving the participants a chance to investigate, motion-wise, answers to the propositional enquiries (as in her AM variations described earlier). These propositions prompt one of the founding principles of generating internal impulses of movement, which Fernandes identifies as an Art of Movement *in* motion (notes from workshop).

I observed that Fernandes's role in the class is both that of a director and that of a passive participant who suggests actions/questions/exercises and partially takes part in them. Meanwhile, her observation does not demonstrate judgement value to the moving-responses of the students. On the contrary, the students' explorations seemed to inform her decisions about the next steps or instructions she would give.

The first question Fernandes asked was for each participant to introduce their research without the use of words. This is a broad question and invites any type of interpretation and answer, which, as I observed, is what happened. This question links to the second founding principle of her Somatic-Performative: the somatic integration of one's conceptual investigation to one's own body (in motion). All participants had their turn to 'move their research' either in the centre of the circle or anywhere else in the studio. Fernandes instructed the witnesses (other students of the class including myself) to write down a word about what we were observing in the movement of the fellow participant. I noticed that this structure composed of mover and witness is intrinsically connected to the AM method. It allows the mover to be fully guided by his/her impulses, thus responding to the third founding principle of the Somatic-Performative practice: the guidance by movement drive. After this initial individual answer-motion the participants verbalised and shared with the rest of the group one word, which would correspond to what had been witnessed by each of us. My own experience of moving-answering the initial question in the centre of the circle included the following note: 'I felt something good, a possibility to live my research' (field notes, December, 2012), confirming the somatic character of Fernandes's pedagogy. After a collective sharing of the words corresponding to our research, the next task was to share, in motion, the most relevant enactments we perceived from the improvisation of the other. This task evolved into a collective moving

where each participant (in motion) began to weave in-between the actions of the others. This culminated in a situation where everyone was moving together through space, in what I would describe as a chaotic harmony.

The experience of this activity placed me in a double situation of a researcher attempting to understand Fernandes's practice and of a participant, personally exploring the SPR and aiming to experience the working premise in relation to my own research. In my personal notes I included my impression of what was happening from both perspectives:

Free, freedom. To know the pathways, to recognise. And from there go beyond. To make my own pathway which spreads wherever I want to explore. If I don't go there I can change, I take my trajectory and I take it somewhere else. I can. I am strong. I know, I have already traced it and now I can take it anywhere I want (field notes 30th November, 2012).

These notes correspond to an action where I was soaking my feet in a water puddle (which some other participant had spilled over the wooden floor) and water-tracing a path with my footsteps. As the wood absorbed the water, which quickly evaporated into the hot air of the room, the trace would also disappear behind me. My path was as ephemeral as my own body in motion and had to be re-traced at every step. However, each step was never the same. Despite the attempt to recover its trace, the pathway was never identical. Interestingly, when analysing these notes I linked this experience to my own research pathway during my doctorate: the constant retracing of my research. My research began as a historical enquiry into the origins and characteristics of Laban praxis in order to link it to the Brazilian landscape of practices. As I began to deepen my knowledge in Laban's movement principles, I felt the need to admit my movement practice alongside my theoretical enquiry. This framework expanded to include feminist enquiry to acknowledge the experience of both researcher and researched. Feminist theory was then substituted by performance studies theories of autobiographical practice. I immersed myself into the development of laboratory explorations to respond to my theoretical enquiries over the practices of the Other, which also involved my research at the Laban Archive (at the

NRCD). However, both the practice and the archival research were eventually substituted by embodied ethnography methods to focus solely on the emerging Laban-practices in Brazil, which shape the current research in this thesis<sup>16</sup>. Dance Ethnography method was chosen as it comprises the possibility of integrating all other methods (embodiment and experience of the field investigated, participation, observation, auto-ethnography and critical enquiry – see Chapter Two, section 4).

Associating this experience with my exploration of water footprints and pathways from Fernandes's workshop, I realise that at every re-tracing of the water footprints the research had to be re-planned over the evaporated structure, which disappeared with the changes to my research methods. When analysing my notes, I was surprised by the association of my research with the actions I was executing during the workshop with no premeditated intentions.

While the participants were moving and interacting with the moving other, Fernandes asked out loud: 'How does my research move', explaining that this question should be answered by each participant and from our own research perspective. She continued to introduce new questions: 'How to write with something that comes from art? Something that can be used in the [performance] scene as well as in the writing and making of the research? How does your research organises itself?' Back in the initial circular formation she concluded the workshop by explaining that those Laboratories intended to lead us to inhabit, live through and discover our own enquiries. This evidenced the second founding principle of SPR: the process and study pursued in an integrated and lively mode.

Throughout the class Fernandes did not mediate, reject or oppose any action or impulse emerging in the class. This follows the third SPR founding principle of allowing the impulse to guide. For example, one of the students climbed up to an elevated plateau in the studio where she danced hanging her body outside the limits of the structure without any safety protection. Another student leaned out of the window of the studio (located on the second floor of the building) with almost all of his body on the outside while he loudly vocalised towards the outdoors of the Department's premises. Fernandes later told me of

another occasion where one of the students led the group to trespass and occupy the construction site of the Department and develop his movements in that space. From this, I deduced that with the choice of allowing the students to be responsible for their own actions, perhaps they also realise that they are responsible for their own research.

I find that Fernandes' peace of mind in observing (and at the same time trusting) students develop risky actions may come from her own life. For example, she experiences this situation on a daily basis when her restless son runs around, particularly fond of exploring edgy places or cliffs (as I observed during their outings to the river in Lençóis). Thus, the trust that she establishes with the people surrounding her, be it physically, maternally or academically/educationally, offers supporting grounds for the other to deeply investigate their personal enquiries/impulses, as I did myself during workshops.

In the second workshop Fernandes began with an initial revision of the first practice, providing a chance for those who were not present in the previous session to catch up. Again it was a chance to advance and reformulate our own research in terms of how it moves. We were asked to watch the other students move and write some words related to it. I realised that the transposition of movement into words is not an obvious one. While executing the task I found that the use of loose words (as opposed to complete phrases) helps a direct association with movement. However not all the students used words. Some drew images and figures and one used music/sounds (Fernandes encourages the use and combination of any media). The possibility of integrating other media and artistic forms responds to the fourth founding principle of the Somatic-Performative: the 'interarts as (anti-)method'. I deduced that Fernandes primarily suggests the use of words as an attempt to foster an articulation between movement and written language. This articulation is essential for the students to produce successful graduate dissertations and theses.

I questioned which words I should use to refer to what I was sensing or seeing. At first I used obvious words that would represent what I detected out of a person's improvisation (such as descriptive vocabulary). Yet, while attending to my descriptive impulse, on the second round I experimented with escaping the obvious descriptive-interpretation, seeking words that would correspond to my perception of the mover's

intention. My own understanding of how I was relating to what I saw/experienced while transcribing experience into words demonstrated that my impetus to perceive an action would influence the synthesis of what I was observing. This understanding took me back to my own research, encouraging a revision of my interpretation and wording of the Laban-related experiences and activities I investigated throughout my research degree.

Towards the end of the second workshop Fernandes suggested that the participants should consider once more the initial question, including what we felt had changed in the ways our research moves. Again we improvised in the centre of the circle, one at a time. I was surprised by how my movement (spatial and dynamic patterns) had changed from the initial session.<sup>17</sup> To increase this change there was an interaction that happened with the rest of the group, influencing the (indulging) dynamics of my movement. While I was in the centre of the circle one of the students drew out a bag of oranges and began to peel them. He passed the oranges around and suddenly most of the participants were peeling, eating and throwing the peel across the circle where I was moving, creating a zesty breeze in the air. Interestingly, I am very fond of this smell (SPR principle of synchronicity) and thus the movement I was doing began to reflect an indulging quality, which came from my own pleasure of smelling the zest of the oranges (SPR principle of attunement with the environment). This situation allowed me to bring forth the pleasure of inhabiting my research, which had not appeared in my previous improvisations. Could my research be a source of pleasure? And what should be done for this to happen? This session allowed me to answer, in motion, these questions as I noticed that I had not yet indulged in my research and enjoyed the pleasures of investigating a topic of my own interest.

My experience with these workshops and Fernandes's SPR granted me an understanding of her method that I would have not had otherwise. The possibility of putting my own research into question and practice not only enabled me to grasp what she proposes as a practice-based method but also granted me a chance to revise my own research practice and enquiry.

I recognise that Fernandes's Somatic-Performative workshops reflect all her past and present practices as well as her everyday living circumstances. Her use of questions to incite motion and the use of somatic philosophy and practice allows her to merge together creative and research activities, believing that both emerge from the same soma-individual. While AM illuminates the possibility of externalising inner impulses and interacting with the environment surrounding the person (during classes or in nature), her background in arts-therapy influenced her respect and trust of the other. The reflexive and systematic analysis of the LMA arranges into analytical categories all that emerges: movement, words, interactions, thoughts, emotions and enquiry. Finally, these experiences all reflect in Fernandes's performances and publications. Fernandes weaves together the practices of the studio/classes into performance (individual or collective happenings) and in her (and the student-researchers') publications<sup>18</sup>.

Regarding the theoretical production involving the Somatic-Performative (publications) and artistic practice (performances) it is difficult to determine which came first: Fernandes' academic or her artistic creations. She points out herself that the line that separates her artistic creation and her academic production is not a bold one (Fernandes, 2006a: 350). In this case it could be a mistake to determine if theory or practice came first in her research or creative processes. Rather they seem to feed one another in Fernandes's constant artistic and academic production. She emphasises: 'words are performative and to dance is to create theory' (*idem*).

## **Section II: Cognitive Science and Pedagogy**

### **Lenira Rengel**

On different grounds than those set by Fernandes, Lenira Rengel has traced a career of practice and research in movement education from amateur circles to professional development activities. Rengel chose a pathway within pedagogy to build



and disseminate knowledge of Laban scholarship associated with her own experience as a dance teacher: 'I have always taught, and it would be awkward if I had not done so' (Rengel, 2008a). This statement supports her concern with teaching strategies, which became evident during our conversations, in her publications as well as in her own pedagogical activities. Rengel underlined that from the moment she was introduced to Laban she began to work with his 'legacy' in everything she does - dance, theatre and education (Rengel, 2012a).

Rengel's career has been evolving according to her pedagogical interests, and her involvement with Laban praxis has become ever more complex. Nonetheless Laban praxis has remained a common factor, cutting across her individual development. In this sense, Laban's conceptual framework served as a scaffolding to support and weave together her emerging enquiries, as I further discuss.

### **1. Laban Dictionary and Communication theories**

Rengel's early concern involving movement and language is rather transparent in her *Laban Dictionary* (Rengel, 2003), and is particularly evident in her scholarship, when she claims that she sees dance as a 'form of communication' (Rengel, 2012b) or a language (Rengel, 2009; Rengel and Ferreira, 2012). She recognises that the publication expressed a potential that is inherent in Laban's own philosophy: to link concept and movement together, having Laban's conceptual framework directly related to its embodied practice (Rengel, 2012a). As she explained, the Dictionary should be 'danced', and its entries experienced in motion. Still, an inattentive reader can mistake the publication for a literary apparatus that lists terminologies and provides their corresponding meanings<sup>19</sup>. This means that the Dictionary does not show a straightforward connection to practice. In fact, I too misunderstood what it was when I first encountered it. Yet, after participating in Rengel's workshops I realised that the Dictionary is directly related to her pedagogical practice and that it serves as a workbook for her classes and workshops (notes from the field). In this sense the entries do not refer strictly to their written 'definition'. Rather they

implicate some sort of movement of the body: a quality, a space, a pattern, an action, etc. (Rengel, 2012a). However I admit that this may only be understood by an experienced Laban-practitioner.

Rengel explains that initially Laban Dictionary came from an attempt to 'place words in what she had learned with her master Maria Duschenes' (Rengel, 2012a), or perhaps link movement practice back to Laban's conceptual framework. Rengel believes that her 'need' to pursue research on Laban's scholarship came from Duschenes's classes and Laban's own philosophy that moving and thinking are a 'single thing'. Later Rengel also identified that speaking, writing and dancing are faculties that relate to each other, and back to Laban praxis (as I discussed and confirmed throughout my research).

The Dictionary offers 189 entries referenced out of Laban's discourse. Most importantly, all entries are in Portuguese. Thus, Rengel does not make any note regarding the translation of the terms. It is true that most of the terms have already been translated in Laban's two books published in Brazil: *Modern Educational Dance* (Laban, 1990) and *Mastery of Movement* (Laban, 1978); however, neither of these books includes notes on translations of Laban's terminologies<sup>20</sup>.

As Rengel's enquiries evolved, new theoretical links were included to merge Laban praxis and her dance pedagogy (Rengel, 2007b). These comprise an investigation involving the semiotic understanding of Laban's discourse (Rengel, 2008c) and the use of cognitive science to illuminate the practice and function of movement and dance (Rengel, 2009). Thus, issues of communication and movement as a language have been flagged across Rengel's scholarship (Rengel, 2009, 2010; Rengel and Ferreira, 2012). Yet, this interest in associating Laban praxis to communication and linguistics is not a new insight. It is most likely that the impetus and stimuli to investigate this topic came from Laban's own discourse, as other scholars had comparable drives. In fact, Laban saw his praxis functioning as a language in different instances of his career (Hodgson, 2001; Maletic, 1987), claiming his Choreology as a 'kind of grammar and syntax of the language of movement' (Laban, 1966: viii). For Hodgson 'Laban set

out to open up physical expression' where '[v]ocabulary and syntax develop into the expressive communication of the dance' (Hodgson, 2001: 222).

The first evidence of an investigation on the linguistic premises of Laban praxis came from Preston-Dunlop's enquiry into Laban's position that dance and movement in general are a language of expression (Preston-Dunlop, 1980b). Responding to this enquiry Preston-Dunlop developed a method of dance analysis based on Roman Jakobson's communication model (Preston-Dunlop, 2003; Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2010), which she called the 'semiology of dance' (Preston-Dunlop, 1995). Despite its roots in semiotics, Jakobson's model rests within a structuralist school of communication. So, attempting to escape structuralist semiotics, Rengel (in the 21<sup>st</sup> century) found in Charles Sanders Peirce a possible system to articulate the language of movement. Essentially, Peirce's theories offer a system for analysis and development of signification networks, which is:

an action, an influence, which is, or involves, a cooperation of three subjects, such as a sign, its object and its interpretant, this tri-relative influence not being in anyway resolvable into actions between pairs' (Peirce in Eco, 1976: 15).

Unlike the structuralist linguistic semiotics of Ferdinand de Saussure, Peirce created a triadic structure of signification where signs are not necessarily linguistic. When addressing Peirce's concepts, Rengel seems to be particularly interested in the possibility of having non-linguistic signs to establish links with dance as a form of communication. Within Peirce's system, Laban's concepts (such as the entries of Rengel's *Laban Dictionary*) would become signs that refer to (and not signify) movement. In this way I hold that Rengel's concern to connect concepts and expression (revealed in her Dictionary) resembles Peirce's semiotic system. This association of Peirce's semiotics with Laban's terminologies seems to be Rengel's own addition to Laban's discourse, as there appears to be no other literature on this topic (further discussed in Chapter Seven).

It is most likely that Rengel's concern with the meaning of movement as non-verbal and metaphorical gesturing was advanced with her latest encounter with cognitive science scholarship. It is possible that Rengel discovered cognitive science, communication and semiotics theories while looking for scientific answers for questions that Laban had left on a metaphysical level<sup>21</sup>. These, for example, relate to Laban's quest for explaining how movement expresses or resembles inner impulses (see Maletic, 1987: 179).

## **2. Addressing Cognitive Science**

Rengel's integration of Laban praxis with cognitive sciences follows upon what Laban had already postulated: 'that thought is movement' (Rengel, 2008b: 7). In fact, she devised the notion that thought and movement of the body are 'bodyconnected' [*corponectivo*] (Rengel, 2007b: 69). The term *bodyconnected* is introduced and thoroughly articulated in her PhD thesis to discuss the use of metaphors in (dance) education (Rengel, 2007b). This compound comes from a translation and substitution that Rengel made of the cognitive scientists Lakoff and Johnson's (1999) use of 'embodied [mind]'. Rengel defends the compound *bodyconnected* by explaining that none of the possible words available in Portuguese would embrace the state of the body where 'mind and body are mutually traversed' (Rengel, 2009: 5).

Rengel's compounding procedure recurs throughout her work, gathering words such as *biocultural*, *bodyperson*, *mindbodyconnected*, *verbconcept*, *bodyconnectivity*, *feelunderstand* (my translation from Portuguese to English). In addition, Rengel sustains that Laban's terminologies could be considered as 'movementwords'. This compound suggests that Laban's concepts represent certain actions rather than resembling static elements or objects. Interestingly, Laban himself predicted this development, stating that 'I hope that my presentation is going to fall on fruitful grounds and that those more qualified than myself shall form word-structures which can give a valid language background to seeing from the point of view of dance' (Laban in Maletic, 1987: 182).

Rengel seems to be particularly interested in the fact that cognitive science demonstrates (with scientific evidence) that mind and body are already considered as a single unit and do not need integration (Rengel, 2008c: 1). To ground this understanding, Rengel uses the concept of *corpomídia* or bodymedia coined by the Brazilian dance scholars Cristine Greiner and Helena Katz (2002). Also based on cognitive science, Greiner and Katz defined bodymedia as the ways in which the 'body thinks', arguing that the body is a media that communicates, receives, processes and transmits information. Rengel postulates that Laban praxis together with bodymedia acts as a 'tool which contributes to explain how yours, mine, the bodies of the students learn to know the world that surrounds us' (Rengel, 2004: 55). In this fashion Rengel merges cognitive science, semiotics and Laban praxis into her non-dualistic pedagogical practice.

Rengel suggests that cognitive science offers a non-dualistic combination of techniques and practices. This is because concepts are based on tested and verified processes (Rengel, 2012a). Indeed, as a shared multi-focused and flexible system, cognitive science can be used to develop knowledge in any field, as (Rengel, 2007b: 17) suggests. Rengel wisely compares this type of research to Laban's own work when she says that both cognitive science and Laban praxis work with factual discoveries, not assumptions and hypotheses (Rengel, 2012a). In this way, Rengel links Laban's scientific endeavours<sup>22</sup> with her own inclination towards cognitive science. As a response to cognitive science's propositions, Rengel's compound words are therefore the result of her convincing attempts to 'avoid the occurrence of dualism' (Rengel, 2008c: 1).

### **3. Pedagogical Scholarship**

Rengel's pedagogical practice has constituted an important share of her activities. Her work on the qualification of schoolteachers yielded a number of publications to be taken as supporting workbooks for school dance teaching, used by public schools in Brazil (Rengel, 2004, 2006, 2007a, 2010)<sup>23</sup>. This means that her discourse directed at

educational dance teaching practice has been reverberating in dozens of teachers and into hundreds of children. As a consequence, Rengel's work developed a strong influence and important status in the national curriculum for Education.

The emergence of Rengel's workbooks responds to the recent addition of dance instruction in schools through federal and state legislation (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases*). In the last decade (2000's) there have been constant discussions and amendments to the law that establishes the disciplines taught in the country's basic education. Dance and theatre became part of the Arts syllabus in state schools (Brazil Ministry of Education website), changing the profile of the discipline and consequently the teachers employed.<sup>24</sup> To feed and support these changes Rengel was invited to collaborate with the state of São Paulo Education Secretary and produce text-manuals that would integrate official textbooks used in state schools.

Rengel supports that the qualification of a teacher involves, first of all, the development of self-understanding: a combination of self-knowledge and skills to deal with students (Rengel, 2012a). Addressing these requirements, she has produced two types of textbooks. The first includes introductory discussion of the importance of dance practice. She follows a general pattern explaining that its practice happens through the body: 'dance is not separated from the body' (Rengel, 2006: 59). She includes discussion of the biological composition of the body, which aims to instruct the reader that mind and body are not separated from each other. To highlight this body-mind integration Rengel suggests the compound *corpomente* (bodymind), emphasising the 'importance of the sensory-motor apparatus in the learning of movement, in dance and in any other field of knowledge'. She also reinforces the relation of bodymind to subjective experience as well as the 'expression of perceptions, of emotions, of thoughts' (Rengel, 2004: 53). Bodymind configures Rengel's major attempt to develop a non-dualistic teaching practice and most of all to pass this belief on to future teachers.

In these same textbooks Rengel introduces Laban's Art of Movement, briefly explaining who Laban was and his main concerns as a theoretician. She highlights the fact that Laban was a 'scholar of human movement who left a precious legacy to the

science of movement' (Rengel, 2006: 62). With the use of simplified vocabulary, Rengel aims to communicate in the most clear and comprehensible manner. She provides a simplified account of how Laban praxis was introduced in Brazil by Maria Duschenes and argues that his 'theory-and-practice is efficient to professionals of different areas connected to the expression of the body' (Rengel, 2004: 53). This introduction is followed by a survey of Laban's educational dance principles focusing on his Effort theory (as Laban himself focused on the Efforts practice when devising his Modern Educational Dance - see Laban, 1963). Here Rengel remembers that the Effort factors are used not only in dance practice but also in dance analysis.

The second type of texts that Rengel produced refers to the actual pedagogical practice of a schoolteacher within the dance discipline taught at public institutions, proposing activities to be undertaken indoors and outdoors. In addition she offers ideas for the teachers who work in primary or secondary schools to develop interdisciplinary activities related to dance. She sustains that interdisciplinary dialogues foster students' understanding of their bodies and helps them develop a theoretical and practical way of feeling and thinking (Rengel, 2010: 47). In other words the interdisciplinarity advocated by Rengel enables a non-dualistic teaching/learning practice where 'theory is done in practice and the practice formats the theory, as they are both acting in the texts of the body' (*idem*). The activities Rengel proposes to the reader (in this case school teachers) include step by step descriptions of actions and teaching strategies such as ways of addressing the student's enquiries regarding movement studies (Rengel, 2006, 2007a, 2010). In general lines, these texts (and my experience with her classes) establish Rengel as an advocate of Laban's Art of Movement.

Overall, the scope of Rengel's scholarship demonstrates her particular interest in the body. However, when she speaks of the body she means the body and mind together, acting and thinking as one single entity. She explains: 'the body has several aspects but everything (emotion, reflexion, thought, perception, etc., etc., etc.) is body' (Rengel, 2004: 56). Rengel's interest in this unified body is reflected in the way she develops her pedagogical practice - her own teaching and the development of the student-teacher. Her

aim is to foster and stimulate the experience of the 'body's system' through a combination of movement experiences, artistic creation and reception/analysis (Rengel, 2004: 58). As I experienced, Rengel's workshops meet this target. For example, the use of improvisation activities to explore Laban's motion factors (time, space, weight and flow) and basic actions/motion of the limbs (straight, curve, twist) allow the students to understand a breadth of possibilities of movement and expression (notes from Rengel's workshops).

#### **4. Pedagogy**

Rengel's teaching methodologies have been evolving since her early start as a dance teacher during her teenage years. One of her concerns has been to be able to demonstrate in practice what she says. While experiencing Rengel's teaching I recognised that she primarily draws on Laban's Efforts and Modern Educational Dance, which she sees as 'instrumental' to investigate and experience different types of movement (Rengel, 2004: 60). For Rengel, not only Laban but also other techniques require long term training to be mastered and used expressively. The mastering of different techniques offers a possibility to combine a range of perspectives including Laban's terminologies.

During the class Rengel makes use of a vast range of Laban's terminologies. At the same time she recommends their replacement with the students' personal ones. This means that when using Laban's terminologies as a scaffolding <sup>25</sup>, a possibility of transgressing their signs comes forth. This implies that the embodiment surpasses the literacy, becoming a corporeal knowing, instead of simply a cognitive one. I observed, however, that during her classes Laban's framework of conceptualising movement is what prevails as the underlying structure connecting relevant concepts to actions (notes from Rengel's classes, November 2012).

When reflecting on how her classes have changed over time, Rengel concludes that there has been a natural evolution, although she claims that she always maintains a basic structure throughout. For Rengel the changes are 'obvious' and come forth



whenever she 'meets' a new technique, as when she 'met Laban' (Rengel, 2012a). Rengel explains these adaptations through the evolutionary framework established by Charles Darwin: where characteristics are both added and removed over time (Rengel, 2012a). Nonetheless she remarks that she never 'stops bringing new things' to the classes and adds that some activities remain while others are removed when no longer appropriate (depending on the people she lectures to).

To prepare her classes Rengel usually follows her intuition: 'I do not prepare too much my class, such as writing notes on paper. I prepare in the sense that if something happened in a way then there needs to be a specific follow-up class' to address whatever happened in the previous one (Rengel, 2012a). The classes in which I participated were basically an introduction to her work and to Laban praxis. Throughout the workshops I realised that Rengel was placing in practice the *movementwords* of her Laban Dictionary. She began with the three basic actions outlined by Laban as straight, curve and twist (Rengel, 2003: 23), always including instructions for the students to pause. When producing these actions I noticed that these exercises proposed an initial focus on the body and its possible shapes/shaping actions. When guiding the improvisation, Rengel also recalled the words that the students themselves had raised about the basic actions of the body. With this she demonstrated that the concepts are just references to types of movement and that any *movementword* can be used to incite motion. She does, however, clarify that she gives preference to Laban's terms, as they reflect his long-term practice and research.

Rengel continues the class by verbally instructing a free exploration of the dimensions (up/down, right/left, and front/backwards); of small and large kinespheric spaces through growing and shrinking motions. This activity changed the focus from our body into movement in relation to space, exploring concepts within our own physical possibilities. I immediately referred back to the concept of *movementwords* and the entries of Rengel's Dictionary. I observed that Laban's terminologies materialise when our bodies come into motion. Thinking in Pierce's triadic perspective (Liszka, 1996: 19), I recognise that here movement would be the (dynamic) object of the concept-sign.<sup>26</sup> Equally I

associate the experience of meaning or interpretant of the concepts through conceiving an action and generating an understanding of what type of movement is being done. Rengel herself does not fully explore this direct relationship of Laban's concepts to Pierce's semiotics in the way I did; nonetheless, she hints at the connection and, in my opinion, develops it through her practice (pedagogy)<sup>27</sup>. Indeed it was through the experience of Rengel's classes that I grasped her concepts of *movementwords* and *bodyconnectivity*, where the mover achieves the conceptualisation of an action when it physically occurs and is consequently understood/interpreted/mastered.

In her classes, Rengel makes sure that every technique, music or prop used is referenced accordingly, bringing theory into her practice and vice-versa. For example, Rengel focused on raising awareness about the anatomy and kinesiology of the feet. Together with the warm-up exercises for feet she also provided images of its structure and functions, fostering the combination of concept, morphology and the sensation of the feet in action (Rengel, 2012a). With this approach she offers a range of knowledge to her students (or teacher-students). In this sense the backboard is an essential piece of equipment, to which she returns throughout the class to record words and concepts that correspond to what the students are experiencing. In the first class I attended, Rengel was anxious that there was nothing available to write on. During the interview she explained: 'if I am giving Laban I like to have a board because I write down a name on the board' and then she demonstrates the action or shows a photo (Rengel, 2012a). This structure of writing and moving, according to Rengel, has always been part of her classes. Rengel confirms that the presence of books in Duschenes's dance studio was the turning point for her to understand that learning dance is not just about moving in front of the mirror: 'I understood that dance thinks, that the body is not a machine for doing exercises, that you can speak, you can comment about the movement, you can stop and create, and we even went on and did some improvisation' (Rengel, 2012a).

She strongly believes that the connection between theory and practice grants her a sense of responsibility for the content of her lectures. Body aptitude becomes something that she draws particular attention to, as this capacity is directly related to a 'body that is

more integrated' (Rengel, 2012a) or *bodyconnected*. When I asked Rengel about the use of different techniques such as yoga, mime and tai-chi-chuan (which I noticed she used throughout her classes), she responded that she began to investigate different routines to improve her teaching. One of the characteristics of Rengel's practice is precisely her use of different body techniques to access Laban's discourse, as each one incites specific qualities of movement. For example, despite not being personally fond of Tai-chi-chuan, Rengel agrees that it addresses specific movement qualities (such as light and sustained) which, when exercised, enhance individual expression. She states that the practice of different techniques and movement styles not only contributes to her pedagogy but has also enlarged her own performance possibilities. Nonetheless she accepts that she cannot force her students into a movement style: 'you will never be able to impose a technique on a body... you cannot mould' (Rengel, 2012a). By this she means that people have to agree to practice a specific technique and also be able to evaluate how training develops their individual style. She believes that this flexible thinking arose from her training with Duschenes early in her career. Hence Rengel tries not to allow her training preferences to influence her choices. In this manner she composes her teaching 'vocabulary' with a range of bodily practices: 'The more repertoire [background] you have, the more capacity, I mean, the more you know, techniques and practices, the more baggage you have' (Rengel, 2012a).

Rengel's engagement with a variety of movement/body techniques reflects her main working attitude: 'I have spoken of theory and practice my entire life, so it is not possible for me to stay only writing... there is no way to separate them any more. In fact, my theory is my practice and my practice is my theory'. Besides her testimony, I realised that her emphasis on her own (moving) body alongside her teaching, academic and administrative positions were essential elements of her life - personal and professional.

### Section III: Choreography and Cultural Leadership

#### Regina Miranda

In contrast with Fernandes and Rengel, Miranda began her career as a dance practitioner and later focussed her efforts on finding ways to conceptualise her work. Her work evolved to encompass the direction and/or choreography of dance/theatrical pieces; management of Laban specialist courses and institutions; developments within the urban cultural sector; and consultations for a variety of projects. Dividing her time between Brazil and the United States, Miranda focuses her creative and entrepreneurial activities on the city of Rio de Janeiro, and establishes different connections to the Laban praxis, depending on the sector she is working within.

Miranda claimed that her current work is located in three sectors: the artistic, the political and the business sector (Miranda, 2008a). In the business sector her aim has been to work with 'empowerment': to educate and develop leadership in individuals and groups of people. I believe that her background in psychoanalysis is useful here. For Miranda the generation of self-knowledge is political and can result in art, which implies that these three faculties (self-knowledge, political and artistic) are combined and inter-related. An example of a combination between artistic, political and entrepreneurial elements was the Choreographic Atelier (*Ateliê Choreográfico*), which she launched and directed from 2003 to 2009 (Przewodowski, 2008). The project involved a free of charge one-year professional training programme that offered choreography and dance training to a wide range of people (students and professionals) who auditioned for the programme. It took place under Miranda's tutelage and was funded by the Municipality of Rio de Janeiro (Motta, 2007). Another example of a conjunction between artistic, political and business elements is Miranda's recent project Rio Creative City Forum 2010-2020 (*Rio Cidade Criativa*). Here Miranda works towards developing arts within Rio de Janeiro and specific neighbourhoods in the city (Miranda, 2013). She defines Creative City as:

urban spaces where the efficient articulation between artistic activities, cultural industries and governmental agencies is capable of producing a cultural magnetism that develops, attracts, and retains talents; promotes social diversity; extends the availability of jobs; generates more knowledge between citizens; develops the creative potential of corporations; and attracts tourists, therefore significantly contributing to the economy of cities and the quality of life of its citizens. (Cidade Criativa, 2014)

The project is composed of an interdisciplinary collective of professionals who gather to initiate arts/culture-based creative solutions directed at urban and social transformation. Miranda does not clarify exactly what she or the project does, nor what its outcomes are. She hints, however, at the fact that it involves collaboration between local artists and their surrounding community, establishing a relationship programme where the arts share their framework with the neighbourhood and at the same time the neighbourhood is empowered by the arts (Miranda, 2013). Miranda emphasises that it is not a project to 'help the arts'. On the contrary, the project seeks to engage the arts with the city's administration in order to find ways in which the arts can help the city. For Miranda this is her way of 'doing politics for the arts' (*idem*). However we could also think that she is actually doing a politics through the arts. During our interview Miranda spoke of the project with enthusiasm. In fact, her excitement regarding its achievements suggested that Rio Creative City is one of her immediate priorities.

In the artistic sector, Miranda has been developing a distinguished career as a choreographer and director of dance and theatre pieces. She defines her work as 'choreographic theatre', combining contemporary dance forms with dramatic texts and spoken word in non-linear narratives. Miranda's dance company *The Regina Miranda & ActorsDancers Company* (founded in 1980) has, according to her, performed more than 30 theatrical pieces (until 2013). Unfortunately I was unable to experience Miranda's choreographic or social practice, which left me with the task of understanding her work based on the lectures I followed, the interview she gave, the fragments of her

choreographic work available online, as well as the limited publications she made available. To engage with the combination of textual and interview materials I drew on discourse analysis techniques (Gee, 2011), tracing parallels of her discourse with her lectures and written publications.

Miranda has gathered a complex vocabulary to conceptualise her work. Throughout Miranda's narratives and scholarship there are many uses of signs and systems (Gee, 2011: 91) demonstrating her commitment to the dialect and framework she is part of. The most eminent of these were borrowed from the psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan, the theories of mathematical topology, and the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. To analyse Miranda's specific activities in relation to the discourse she develops I begin by unpacking her theory of Body-Space.

## **1. Body-Space**

One of Miranda's main concerns rests in the theoretical representation of her artistic and cultural practice. This interest is expressed in her book *Body-Space*<sup>28</sup> (Miranda, 2008b), where she promises to describe situations that LMA was not able to define and categorise. For example, to represent the work of the actor-dancer in the process of becoming an 'Other of oneself and returning back to oneself', Miranda introduced the concept of the Klein bottle (Miranda, 2013). She described this process as a continuous motion, without a breakage between becoming Other and oneself once again. Miranda compared this almost continuous motion of becoming to the topological transformations of the Klein bottle (*idem*). Along similar lines, throughout *Body-Space* Miranda outlines a range of topological figures (such as the Moebius strip, the torus and the Klein bottle) to represent the psycho-physical movement that emerges within the performance space or creative processes.

In *Body-Space* Miranda places particular emphasis on addressing the topological figures used by the Lacan to relate back to her choreographic practice. Lacan takes the

figures as representations as well as a metaphor of psychological and physical states. In Lacan's theories the figures function as ways of conceiving/understanding particular psycho-physical states (Ragland-Sullivan and Milovanovic, 2004). Lacan does not give importance to the figures themselves (shapes), but rather to the properties that they reveal when manipulated, 'indicating complexities caused by the functioning of human mental life' (*idem*: xvi). The same could be said of the function of the figures in Miranda's Body-Space when she borrows the properties of topological figures to represent the theatrical realm.

Topology is the science that deals with 'qualitative properties of geometric figures not only in ordinary space but also in space with more than three dimensions' (Bonell, 2005: 110). This science is specifically directed at studying the properties which characterise a figure and that remain the same even when the figure goes through processes of deformation, completely changing its metric properties of shape and size. This means that two apparently different shapes can have the same properties and thus are understood by topology as the same thing.<sup>29</sup>

Still, one of Miranda's main claims is that the use of Topology as a representation scheme goes beyond Laban's theories of space or Choreutics (Miranda, 2012: 32). In addition, her attempt to compare and contrast Laban [Euclidean] praxis with topological figures adds a layer of complexity to her discourse, which makes it difficult to understand at first glance. This is because Miranda is not straightforward when relating Lacan's topology to her artistic experiments. Rather, she tries to establish a direct relationship between the artistic realm and the properties of the topological figures themselves (which belong to the field of mathematics). Indeed Miranda hinders the reading of her work by suggesting a parallel of Body-Space with Choreutics.

Miranda believes that her quest for finding modes of representing situations and spaces created in performance settings is similar to Laban's endeavours. Laban did suggest in *Choreutics* (1966: 135) that 'a new view and a new practice of our subject will arise'. However, in Miranda's theorisation, it is not explicit how Body-Space links to the type of investigation Laban was conducting. In fact, this particular comparison raises some doubts<sup>30</sup>. This is because Laban's *Choreutics* is a theory related to the physical space

that is traced by the body in motion. It is the actual and virtual space created by movement (as I have experienced myself through the practice of Laban's space harmony). In contrast, Body-Space describes geometrical representations of psychological states and spaces that relate, combine and connect the mental and the physical. Still, Miranda's attempt to conceptualise the spaces created with(in) performance through topological figures reveals a fresh approach to contemporary performance practice and theory. In fact I recognise that Body-Space approaches Laban's thoughts on *dynamosphere* (see Laban, 1966 where Laban introduces the links between outer movement and inner intent and dynamic qualities) though this is not explicit in Miranda's claim. Nevertheless her work is a strong contribution to the field of movement studies as it offers unique perspectives upon situations (or movement) generated both during performance making as well as in the spectacle (further discussed in Chapter Seven).

Miranda's enquiry related to the transformations and relationships between performer, character and spectator is not unique to theatrical practice (see Schechner, 1993). Her use of topology to represent these enquiries, however, may be. For example, she proposes the use of topology – more specifically the figure of the torus – to account for the game played by the performer who, when observed by the audience, is both seen as the performer himself as well as the other he enacts - the character (Miranda, 2008b: 63). Topology demonstrates that when the torus is flipped, its inside becomes its outside in a continuous process of transformation, without breaks (*idem*). Then, Miranda takes these principles to explain the constant flow between the performer and his/her enactments/character.

Moving the topological principles addressed in Body-Space beyond the theatrical realm, Miranda turns her focus to society, the place where art exists as a natural practice (Miranda, 2013). She investigates ways in which society produces or inspires artistic production and vice versa. In this case the artist and his or her artwork are in harmony and correspond to their surroundings. Attempting to systematise a theory that speaks of contemporary spatiality - use and engagement with space in artistic and sociological practice - Miranda developed her *Sociochoreology*.



## **2. Sociochoreology**

Miranda's Sociochoreology sees everyday life as performance and draws on the postulates of the Brazilian theatre director Augusto Boal, who saw everyday behaviour as theatrical and spectacular (Boal, 2009). With theoretical underpinnings in Performance Studies (Richard Schechner), Theatre (Augusto Boal), Social Science (Henri Lefebvre; Edward Soja), system thinking (Christian Pohl and Gertrud Hirsch Hadorn), Choreology (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez Colberg) and LMA (Irmgard Bartenieff and Peggy Hackney), Sociochoreology remains as a practice more than a theory (notes from Miranda's Sociochoreology class, January, 2013). Aiming to establish categories of analysis, Miranda chose to adapt Preston-Dunlop's Choreological Perspective (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2010) to look more closely at daily life as a spectacle. Preston-Dunlop's four strands of the dance medium (Preston-Dunlop, 2010a) - the performer, the movement, the space and the sound - became, in Miranda's Sociochoreology, the following categories: the performer (the agent that acts in the social environment); sound; time (referring to duration of an event and/or historical location); space (as both geographical location and locale of action); and action, as interaction between performer/agent and social environment (Miranda, 2012).

To achieve a Sociochoreological practice Miranda instructed the students to go out on the streets and observe-participate in a daily social/urban situation (notes from my participation in Miranda's Sociochoreology class, January 2013). In this activity Miranda instructed the students to look at who (the social agent, the performer), what and how (actions), where (space) and when (time), attending to that which was meaningful to them as performer/agent. After the groups returned from their 'field investigation', they prepared a performative-presentation of the situation observed, attempting to re-present their experience of action within a social environment. A selection of situations were observed and transposed: a gas station, a pharmacy and a restaurant.

For example, one group investigated a restaurant setting. The intensification of the performer-agent's awareness of the space, the sounds, the timings, the people, the staff, the behaviour patterns, led them to discover a set of complexities involving the background and functioning of the establishment which would not be noticed otherwise (as they claimed during their performative presentations). The performer-agents discovered the history of the space (which used to be a family home) and the reason for its specific decor as well as the disposition of the staff and the food buffet. They also grasped the affection of the staff, which involved controversial feelings in relation to the establishment. The analytical behaviour of the performer-agents was critical in these discoveries, which also generated a shift in the restaurant staff's awareness of the place they inhabited. These were triggered by the intervention of the agents in the space through questions and conversation with the staff. Similar discoveries were presented by other groups (notes from the field).

During the class, Miranda drew our attention to the fact that when observing a situation the performer/social actor notices the possibilities of 'acting' over what is happening in the environment (or making an intervention of some type). However, for this to happen the performer needs to be aware of the possibilities in between the behaviour norms set in a locale (notes from Miranda's Sociochoreology class, January 2013). For Miranda this consideration is unique to the individual artistic enquiry of the agent. From my understanding this enables the performer to perceive daily contexts or spaces initially taken as ordinary, as places of possibilities and renewal.

Sociochoreology seems to link to Miranda's Body-Space, stretching its 'individual processes of transformation' inherent in the properties of topology figures, into a possible 'sociocultural process of change' (Miranda, 2012: 30). Thus I interpret this as a methodological (practical) bridge that links artistic practice to social action. I further develop the stages of Miranda's Sociochoreology practice when discussing the phase of her creative process, as her artistic and social practices follow similar frameworks.

All in all, the Sociochoreology exercise seems to have transformed the perspective that the performer-agents had of the place they explored. I observed that the exercise

empowered them to notice how an exploratory action by an artist in an ordinary urban space enables them to draw fresh understandings of behaviour as well as propose other ways in which city inhabitants experience the places they interact with in daily life (notes from field). One possibility of this awareness, although not explained as such by Miranda, seems to be a choreographic practice and performance similar to the process of *Rua Alice 75* (Miranda, 2008b), with which I engage more extensively below.

### **3. Creative Process**

During our interview Miranda unpacked the stages present in her work, differentiating her creative process in relation to her choreography (Body-Space) and to Sociochoreology. A landmark for both of these practices seems to have been her piece *Rua Alice, 75: quartos de aluguel* (from 2002), which she used as the main example of her practice throughout her classes on the postgraduate course (field notes January, 2013) and during our interview (Miranda, 2013). Miranda explained that *Rua Alice, 75* was a performance installation that took place in the premises where her dance company used to be based. The locale served both as part of the creative process of the piece as well as the final performance. This hints at Miranda's interest in non-traditional theatrical spaces and consequent acquaintance with postmodern theatre and dance.

Miranda recollects how the house itself (physical space) of *Rua Alice, 75* triggered the composition of the piece. She explained that it was from the architectural remains of the construction works and leftovers of paint that she noticed a specific history belonging to that building. This history revealed a pattern (of tenement house-sharing) that also corresponded to other houses in the street and neighbourhood. Then she stretched her investigation to the entire street, where she began to interact with other people who lived and worked in the area. The stories that she gathered fed into the composition of (movement) vocabulary, and later composition of the dramaturgy of the piece. The use of the space's history including the neighbourhood is a common practice within theatre

productions. A traditional example is the theatre anthropology of the theatre director Jerzy Grotowsky (Barba and Savarese, 2006). However, Miranda does not make reference to any other performer with similar creative processes.

Miranda describes how the creative process of *Rua Alice*, 75 involved a collection of data in the surrounding neighbourhood of her dance company's headquarters (Miranda, 2008b). This first stage of Miranda's choreographic practice comprised the gathering of data and their experimentation in the studio. This occurred through a process of 'self recognition' where performers detach from themselves to be able to observe themselves, seeking patterns of movement in their own behaviour, like the Klein bottle type of transformation (Miranda, 2013). Miranda proposes that the pattern retrieved from the initial experimentation (mentioned above) creates a map composed of the 'desires' of the performers, which I identify as a link with Lacan's psychoanalysis. Miranda points out that this stage focuses on 'expanding [movement] vocabulary' (Miranda, 2013).

In a social environment, Miranda takes the same creative process to inform her Sociochoreology practice. In Sociochoreology, the first stage of the creative process uses the cityscape to gather movement vocabulary, generating a 'self recognition' of the performers/agents in relation to the cityscape explored (Miranda, 2013). This recognition emerges from the specificities of the particular city and the ways in which the performer/agent personally relates to it (likes, dislikes, etc.). In my experience with Miranda's Sociochoreology class, this first stage occurred during our exploration of a specific space in the neighbourhood where we gathered impressions, sensations and interpretations from the experience with a specific cityscape.

The second stage of Miranda's creative practice involves the rehearsal, the experimentation, and the practice that operates the (Klein Bottle type of) transformation announced in the first stage. According to Miranda this is the stage of bridges, where the performer moves from one to Others of him or herself, without generating value judgements (of likes and dislikes), looking for ways to embody transformation and develop theatrical characters. In Sociochoreology it is also where the performer/agent embodies the otherness retrieved/collected in the first stage.

This second phase also includes the development of the dramaturgy of the piece. In *Rua Alice, 75* the interviews and videos collected from the initial fieldwork were put together to compose a dramaturgy that merged the voices of the local inhabitants and constructed Others (or characters created by the performers). It also included fragments of Brazilian literature. In fact, the use of dramaturgical structures seems to be a trademark in Miranda's repertoire. She either composes the dramaturgy herself, as in *Rua Alice, 75* (with the collaboration of her performers), or she adapts literary texts or poems, proposing a 'crossing of performance and literature' (Miranda, 2008b: 108)<sup>31</sup>.

Miranda explains that in both choreography and Sociochoreology the process in the second stage is never stable: it is always recreating itself. This statement also relates Miranda's practice to an 'open work' (Rubidge, 2010), as the operation of transformation does not allow stagnation to happen (Miranda, 2012). Miranda goes further to compare these 'open' processes to the ways in which cities are constantly growing and changing.

The third stage of Miranda's creative process is the period of integration, which involves the staging of the piece. This also includes the different interpretations and perspectives that the audience projects onto the material. In Sociochoreology Miranda did not make this stage clear. But from the experience I had in her class I believe that this stage includes the organisation of the experience into a performative (re)presentation of the nature of a specific place, as we developed during class (explained earlier). During the presentations, particular attention was given to how we transformed ourselves with the experience as well as transformed the people involved (through our intervention in the place observed).

In an artistic context, transformation becomes the final product of a piece, as in *Rua Alice, 75* (Miranda, 2013). I observed that transformation is an important component of Miranda's activities as she has highlighted previously (Miranda, 2012, 2013; Przewodowski, 2008). Transformation was also featured in Miranda's Creative City project. In similar ways she revealed during interview that she is astonished by the way in which business executives who participate in the project are also transformed by the experience of exposing themselves to urban spaces. Their experience involves:

not to make theatre, not to become actors, but to become citizens, engage with their environment and, and trying to change a paradigm of just, hmm, economic success to another one, that is of development, that includes the development of the human being (Miranda, 2013).

Miranda's voice exposes her interest in the transformation that Sociochoreology offers to entrepreneurs and business people as well as to the community and performers.

#### **4. Choreographic Work**

The analysis of one of Miranda's recent choreographies demonstrates the particularities of her works that her discourse does not cover.<sup>32</sup> *Manuscritos do Leonardo* or *Leonardo's Manuscripts* is one of Miranda's recent pieces (2013) and as has been available online (on video-streaming website). Miranda's personal interest in da Vinci's literature and its resemblances to Laban praxis had already been highlighted in her class (notes from the field).

The piece reveals a dramaturgy that seems to be composed of biographical texts of Leonardo da Vinci (or has been adapted to sound as such). This is because all spoken text is first person narration, as if da Vinci was talking to himself. In fact, da Vinci's words from the dramaturgy include his thoughts regarding qualities and possibilities of movement of the body and of natural elements. In this sense, Vinci's thoughts (originally from the 18<sup>th</sup> century) resemble Laban's own discourse. In the choreography these parallels are depicted through the combination of da Vinci's text and the embodiment of Laban's movement principles. The parallel itself, however, is enacted but not verbalised.

The entire 27 minutes of the performance involve two female actors-dancers<sup>33</sup> on stage, dressed in two different pale-coloured costumes which seem to offer a contemporary reading of renaissance workshop attires. During most of the performance, in addition to the execution of movement sequences, the dancers deliver a text (speech)

alternating the narration between them. The combination of movement and speech suggest that their movement illustrates what they are saying. The movement is composed of either abstract or behavioural gestures (where the trunk rests in the vertical axis and the arms and legs move surrounding it). These are combined with dynamic references to the qualities of movement verbally pronounced by the dancers from da Vinci's theories. In addition there are also stylised sequences that engage the entire body, which at times clearly demonstrate patterns of Laban's Space Harmony scales.

The piece is set to a conventional theatrical space (black box) where two extra large parchments of fabric hang vertically and two are set horizontally on the floor, making reference to ancient scriptures. In the front left-hand corner there are three wooden frames containing classic laboratory glass equipment and two metal bowls, making references to medieval scientific laboratory. The interactions of the actors-dancers with the props available are triggered by the text they deliver. Following a renaissance theme, the soundscape of the piece is composed by guitar soundscape (with no specific composer identified), which does not match nor influence the dynamics of the dance.

This particular piece does not seem to demonstrate a dramatic tension of a conflict and a resolution. This means that the energy involved throughout the choreography is linear and does not generate peaks and a closure at the end. It resembles a window into da Vinci's workshop as if the audience is brought to look at a day of the renaissance artist's life.

In regards to the overall aesthetic of Miranda's works, from her descriptions and the snippets of video available online, I suggest parallels with physical theatre practice. This is because Miranda's work proposes a combination of movement and speech in both conventional and non-conventional spaces. Sanchez-Colberg (2007) explains that physical theatre is a term that has a collective definition. The term identifies a type of production which 'focuses on the unfolding of a narrative through physicalised events that which relegates verbal narrative - if at all present - to a subordinate position' (2007: 21). The author goes on to explain that these aesthetics are present both in dance and in theatre practice. In this sense, I would suggest that the merging of physical performance

and dramaturgical narratives places Miranda's practice within the scope of physical theatre, even though she articulates it as 'choreographic theatre' (Miranda, 2013).

## **5. Ethics Code for Laban Practice**

One of the classes Miranda taught on her postgraduate course was on ethics. The topic drew my attention as I have not seen similar discussions in the Laban studies field. In fact, Miranda mentioned during interview that she was the person who suggested to the LIMS in NY that an ethics code of practice should be created. As a consequence she decided to include the topic in her postgraduate course in Brazil.

Miranda's main concern when discussing ethics in the Laban field is to generate discussion of how Laban professionals use their power as movement analysts (Miranda, 2013). Her initial impetus when creating the code of ethics for the LIMS was to protect the field and the (LIMS) institution, in honour of Irmgard Bartenieff. This protection of the field and the institution related to Laban praxis is not a new practice. Both Rudolf Laban and the institutions that carry his name have been placed under protection by his followers on different occasions. A recurring example is the discussion of Laban as a Nazi that was effaced by his followers and which has only recently been exposed by dance historians (as mentioned in the first chapter). Another example rests in the Laban Guild, which is still (in 2015) working towards keeping the integrity of Laban's name and work, revealing itself as a rather closed institution (as I have experienced from the contact I had with the Guild from 2011 to 2015). Furthermore, the exclusivity of the LIMS's and the Laban Guild's magazines to the members of each institution (as I have not seen copies circulating in Laban-related events) reinforces my experience of the protection of the field of knowledge and community formation. In my opinion this conceals the circulation and exchange of information in the field and restricts wider debate of the Laban scholarship.

Miranda made it clear during her class that the code of ethics is only a 'set of suggestions' because there is no control over what people do when they leave the



institution to develop their professional lives (Miranda, 2013). Even though she does not give much detail on the matter, interestingly Miranda explains that the code of ethics not only aims to protect the institution but also the practitioners.

During the lecture on Ethics, Miranda proposed five points to be considered. The first was an indication for the practitioners to be understanding and assuming responsibility; the second emphasises respect for others (people and institutions); the third involves allowing the Other to be himself/herself, with his or her uncertainties (by this Miranda means to seek the opinion of others who are able to criticise with a certain respect for the other's work); the fourth is to observe and negotiate power in a conscious manner; finally, the fifth indicates the manifestation of honesty (including individual fears and anxieties). Given that in the lecture Miranda did not give a specific theoretical reference so we could follow up her line of thought, and neither did she provide means for the development of an in depth understanding on the matter after the lecture.

I believe that there is an apparent complication when setting a code of ethics that establishes normalisations and practice standards for a field of knowledge/practice, especially when this field's initial creator and prominent collaborators have not been openly consulted. This problematic increases in a field that has generated different strands of practice which do not communicate and that have been established as independent fields themselves<sup>34</sup>. Yet, this thesis does not intend to discuss the pros and cons of having this sort of normalisation established. Nevertheless the topic is a site of debate for future considerations involving the repercussions of developing norms for the work of people who are no longer alive.

To sum up, it is apparent in Miranda's description of her creative practices that she links her methodology of developing both theatrical and cultural works to the ways in which psychoanalysis and mathematics interpret topological phenomena. It is important to highlight that despite the thorough theorisation of her practice, the style of her writing keeps her theoretical activity within an artistic discourse.

## **Conclusion: Main Characteristics of Brazilian Laban Practice**

The practices of the three artist-researchers investigated throughout this chapter offer concrete examples of how local practitioners have been engaging with Laban praxis in Brazil. With their unique achievements Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda have made significant contributions to the local and international field of Laban (and movement) studies.

With the description of their work I demonstrated how they came to develop their practices and their current activities. Fernandes began her career as a researcher and found in the artistic premises of dance theatre and in somatics a way to approach Laban's postulate of connecting inner feelings/impulses with outer movement expression. Combining AM method with other somatic and philosophical thoughts, Fernandes merged therapy with art and philosophy in order to create a methodology for research in the arts. Her work is primarily autobiographical, but it could also be considered as site-specific, as her works tend to absorb the environment she experiences or performs in.

On the other hand Rengel started off as a pedagogue and managed to get to the core of Laban's discourse through the semiotics of Charles S. Pierce and the scientific realm of cognitive science. Rengel clarifies that Laban's concepts (signs), their object (movement), and their interpretant (person or mover) have a unique relationship between each other, as well as a specific materiality (words, movement and meaning). She used this structure to develop further work that illuminates a contemporary dance pedagogy.

Having developed a busy artistic and entrepreneurial career, Miranda had an early career as a dancer and choreographer. She later combined her experiences to develop theatrical spectacles and social activities that use artistic knowledge to enhance cultural awareness and citizenship. Inspired by Laban's investigation of movement in space in relation to geometry and mysticism, Miranda created a philosophy to address her artistic and social enquiries. Drawing on the principles of mathematical topology and

psychoanalysis, Miranda created a theory that discusses artistic and social processes based on principles of transformation.

Despite having carved pathways extremely different from one another, the work and enquiry of the practitioners demonstrate a number of similarities which, as I have discussed, originated in Laban's own discourse. There are three common axes of enquiry that stand out in the work of the three practitioners and that are directly related to the core of Laban praxis. These are: the attempt to overcome the body-mind dualism; the on-going interest in artistic practice; and the research endeavour. Laban praxis has equally been standing on this axial tripod (as mentioned in the first chapter) thus reverberating in the work of the Brazilian practitioners in diverse ways. It is most likely that Laban praxis itself incites a working pattern that involves integration (non-dualist thought), artistic and research initiatives.

The first point shared among them is that each of the practitioners has found different theoretical-practical proposals to overcome the body-mind dualism, a fundamental standpoint of Laban's project. Fernandes found the answer in the somatic practices, which are also part of the heritage of Laban studies. The understanding that the mind and the body are a single thing - the soma - has allowed her to eliminate dualistic thinking/practice. For Fernandes, the mind moves and the body thinks, enabling the integration of both faculties. In a similar manner, Rengel discovered in the neuro-scientific perspective of cognitive science a discourse that defends the unison of mind and body<sup>35</sup>. Rengel also initiated a type of game where she compounds words, indicating a possibility of perceiving mind, body and other linguistic dualistic thinking as single entities, as well as single words. Meanwhile, inspired by psychoanalysis and mathematics, Miranda found solutions to Laban's enquiry on body-mind dualism by associating psychoanalysis with the discipline of topology and its principles of transformation. With this combination, Miranda arrived at a solution to the dualisms present in the space (internal-external and myself-other) of social and theatrical events.

Secondly, artistic practice seems to be a necessary part of each practitioner's work. Either in a reflexive manner, or pedagogically, all three practitioners have addressed the

human expression as an axis of their work. The attempt to express themselves or to guide and facilitate the expression of the other is reflected in their productions of dance, dance theatre, choreographic and physical theatre and dance education. Fernandes follows an autobiographical performance practice where she creates happenings and dance theatre pieces related to her own life experiences. Artistic practice is also the vortex of her academic enquiry, where she drives questions from practice-based research as well as bringing other theoretical enquiry towards aesthetic creation. In contrast, the artistic practice in Rengel's work involves the facilitation of the creative practice of others. It is through her teaching that she awakens aesthetic awareness and provides tools (mastery of movement) for the Other(s) to generate artistic products. Her pedagogical practice offers students a possibility to approach their own perception and *bodymedia* in order to generate individual expression. On the other hand, Miranda's artistic practice is devoted to the production of dance and theatre works. She works within the realm of contemporary performance, directing and choreographing pieces. Her practice also involves the artistic development of non-artists, who, after being immersed in her methodology, develop a (artistic) sensibility toward their environment, learning to notice what is beyond the obvious.

The performance practice of Fernandes and Miranda both reveal an 'open work' character. My own experience as a performer has also resulted in diverse pieces that are based on the same principles. From this I suggest that Laban praxis incites contemporary choreography that is open to the circumstances of the performance event, being modified at each presentation but nonetheless maintaining its creative structure. Again, returning to the discussion that Laban praxis is a 'technique of the body' (Introduction of thesis), this may explain its inclination to generate open choreographic works.

Finally, research practice has sustained the work of all three practitioners, taking place in a formal (academic) environment or informally in the studio or in their lives. Fernandes and Rengel are immersed in formal academic environments, which (in Brazil at least) necessarily require research<sup>36</sup>. They both set out to investigate artistic practice in relation to the wider artistic field of enquiry, where they situate their work within the field

and exercise the academic practice of referencing the knowledge, which they draw into their research. Miranda also exercises a thorough research practice. She, however, does not develop it within academic standards. She does not situate her work in relation to others, nor does she systematically reference her sources. Nonetheless her investigation can be associated with artistic research such as the work of the theatre director Eugenio Barba, and the choreographers William Forsythe and Jonathan Burrows (to name a few contemporary practitioners), who have developed a body of knowledge investigating their practice in depth creating their own theories in relation to what they have accomplished.

The fact that the Brazilian practitioners still maintain the core motif of Laban's explorations defines them as part of the community of people who have been investigating beyond the praxis initially introduced by Laban (and his close collaborators). Furthermore, all three practitioners claim their sense of belonging in Laban's discourse as they believe they are still 'doing Laban', despite their contemporary perspectives. This sense of belonging is recognised in the fact that their work responds to Laban's discourse enquiry, as well as demonstrate thorough articulation of Laban praxis.

The work developed by the practitioners introduced here is relevant to contemporary Laban praxis. Their work becomes relevant because they demonstrate possibilities to advance Laban's initial enquiry through a variety of associations with current – artistic and scientific – discourse. It seems that these practitioners have absorbed Laban's discourse and digested it to create their own individual systematics, configuring their unique metier. Nonetheless Laban's heritage of movement studies is still present and being proclaimed in their individual discourse. Having this in mind, I now move to investigate further this claim, considering how these practitioners absorbed Laban praxis and merged it with their previous background, further considering the product of their individual combination of practices as belonging to the field of Laban studies.

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#### Notes to Chapter Six:

<sup>1</sup> These strands were described and discussed in the first and fourth chapters of the thesis when analysing the heritages and strands of Laban's discourse.

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<sup>2</sup> While consulting a mathematician I was informed that Laban's association of the Moebius strip with the lemniscate is not an accurate one. Mathematically the Moebius strip is not analogous to the lemniscate, as they have different properties. While the Moebius strip is a three-dimensional topological figure, the lemniscate is a two dimensional geometrical shape.

<sup>3</sup> Fernandes used the word *pulções* in Portuguese, which when translated results in 'punctures'. I chose to substitute 'punctures' for the term 'internal impulse' as the meaning of *pulção* is related to the internal impulses of the individual.

<sup>4</sup> Fernandes not only expresses her cultural sensitivity in her academic publications and artistic creations but also in her daily life. Her wardrobe is full of ethnic clothes from different cultures such as Indian saris to Latin, queer and club culture apparels. She also has a multicultural eating habit including taste for Italian cuisine, Indian, South East Asian, Greek, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Latina is the feminine word in Portuguese for the expression 'Latino'.

<sup>6</sup> I used the term patchwork quilt as a translation of the common expression in Portuguese of *colcha de retalhos*, which intends to give a metaphoric image of the arbitrary combination of different patterns into a single garment.

<sup>7</sup> I have named Fernandes' analysis 'anthropological' because Fernandes interprets what she observes through cultural comparisons, linking practices, aesthetics and politics of different cultures together (Fernandes, 2004). Her movement analysis perspective includes not only dynamics and forms but her cultural sensitivity which informs an analysis that expresses anthropological concerns.

<sup>8</sup> Fernandes co-motion analysis departed from her Laban Moving Analysis (Fernandes, 2006a: 350) where she inspected video recordings using an 'Active Observation' (*Observação Realizadora*) (Fernandes, 2010: 91). Here the observer in the dance studio not only watches and '(a)notates' the movement perceived but also performs the principles identified, achieving a gestalt of the experience of perceiving, understanding and performing (*idem*).

<sup>9</sup> According to Lowell (2007), Mary Whitehouse's AM has become increasingly well-known and is 'practiced by people at various levels of physical skill, dance, or movement training and for diverse purposes. Dance therapists use it as a mode of therapy; choreographers and other artists use it as a resource for images and movement material; some use it as a dance-movement practice valued for its kinesthetic insights; some use it as a form of movement meditation or group ritual for personal and spiritual enrichment, many use it for combinations of these' (Lowell, 2007: 50). This definition by one of the practitioners of the technique highlights the uses and diversity of the practice. The practice itself involves a couple in which one person becomes the mover while the other acts as the visual testimony. I have practiced the technique myself on different occasions, with highlights to the workshop with Rosa Maria Govoni (a certified dance movement therapist) during the Laban 2013 meeting in Monte Verità in Switzerland.

<sup>10</sup> With a similar translation impetus, when Fernandes translated Effort and Eukinetics into Portuguese she proposed the use of the word *expressividade* which would be translated as expressivity or expression. She defends this translation following the German *antrieb*, the initial term used by Laban to account for his Eukinetics studies (Fernandes, 2006a: 120). This demonstrates Fernandes' attempts to explore the physicality or practice of the term in order to find the most appropriate word in Portuguese, rather than simply executing a translation based on the literal meaning of the word.

<sup>11</sup> Fernandes's environmental practices could also be seen from the lens of Site-Specific performance. However, since she does not claim her work to be part of this canon, I will maintain Fernandes's original understanding of the work as environmentally attuned.

<sup>12</sup> A factor that hinders the identification of AM in Fernandes' practice is that the method itself does not have a fixed aesthetic form as other styles of dance practice, such as classical dance forms of Ballet and Bharatanatyam; modern dance forms such as Graham and Cunningham or even postmodern/contemporary dance forms such as Contact Improvisation and Release technique. Rather it is a method that is based on working principles. The movement forms that emerge depend on the inner impulses of the mover which vary from person to person (Frieder, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> According to Peter Levine (1997: 120) Somatic Experiencing is a 'gentle step-by-step approach to the renegotiation of trauma. The felt senses is the vehicle used to contact and gradually mobilise the powerful forces bound in traumatic symptoms. It is akin to slowly peeling the layers of skin of an onion, carefully revealing the traumatized inner core.' The Author explains that this is a method

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which he has been developing during one to one therapeutic sessions that facilitate the healing trauma.

<sup>14</sup> As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the use of questions to trigger movement is a well-known practice of the German choreographer Pina Bausch and widely discussed by the scholars specialised in Bausch's work (Gradinger, 1999: 25).

<sup>15</sup> My own choreographic practice structured over Laban's movement principles also involves an 'open work' framework as I have devised and presented as a Lecture-Demonstration entitled 'Working with games as generators of movement dynamics/efforts to construct a dance dramaturgy of an open choreographic work' during the assessment for the Dynamic Body module of the SDCS at Trinity-Laban in February, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> These changes were strongly influenced by the numerous changes of supervisor throughout my research, mainly due to restructuring plans from the University of Surrey, where I initiated my PhD. In total I had seven different people involved with my supervision throughout my research.

<sup>17</sup> By change I mean that I noticed that my dynamics shifted from an effort combination of fighting to indulging (see Laban, 1980: 71) that results in significant shifts in the movement qualities developed.

<sup>18</sup> An example of these results is the thematic working session of Somatic-Performative research which took place during the VIII congress of the Brazilian Association of Scenic Arts (in 2014) and the special edition of the postgraduate journal *Repertório* (see Fernandes, 2012b) of the Performing Arts Postgraduate Programme of UFBA.

<sup>19</sup> I had done myself this mistake prior to having experienced Rengel's workshops. Despite the fact that she clearly states that the Dictionary is to be practices, the actual embodiment of the concepts are not obvious. I found that this dichotomy between concept and embodiment are recurrent in Laban's own publications, thus the need to participate in classes that physically explore Laban praxis.

<sup>20</sup> Regarding the translation of the concepts in both of Laban's books published in Portuguese, the publications contain no commentary by the translators to explain the ways in which the concepts were transferred from English to Portuguese. These books were originally written in English as they are part of Laban's later career. While comparing the Portuguese and English versions I believe that the Portuguese versions should be revised as I have observed that some of the terms were translated literally and not functionally (responding to the actual movement physicality).

<sup>21</sup> The metaphysical language that Laban uses to express his thoughts is visible in his writings. Laban opens up a number of topics and most of the time leaves them unexplained. Laban's *Choreutics* (1966) is an example of his use of metaphorical language that is not explained or even referenced. His autobiography (Laban 1975) is another. This suggests that this was his style of producing scholarship. Nonetheless it has allowed the future generation of practitioners to work on unravelling his work.

<sup>22</sup> According to Terpis, Laban's scientific endeavours were related to his observation of the human movement phenomenon and development of knowledge about it (see Terpis in Maletic, 1987:30). Laban himself added that his scientific position would awaken 'dance insights' (Laban, in Maletic, 1987: 182).

<sup>23</sup> This information was retrieved from the website of the publisher of these manuals ([www.fde.sp.gov.br](http://www.fde.sp.gov.br) accessed in 10/08/2014), which is the Foundation for the Development of Education of the State of São Paulo. This is a State organisation responsible for publishing manuals and workbooks to be used in the State's public education system.

<sup>24</sup> In a second instance the addition of dance and theatre to the arts syllabus of the Brazilian national education programme involves the hiring of dance specialist teachers in the schools, which I believe is directly reflected by the increase in dance HE courses in the country to respond to this demand.

<sup>25</sup> Laban himself introduced the term scaffolding to refer to spatial structures over which a movement scale develops itself (Laban, 1966). Here, the use of the term scaffolding is pertinent to Rengel's practice, as she takes Laban's movement principles as structures over which her pedagogy evolves.

<sup>26</sup> Liszka explains that Pierce's definition of dynamic object involves the 'dynamism, the machine that drives the semeiotic process' compelling the sign (1996:21).

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<sup>27</sup> Rengel (2007b: 65) introduces Pierce's theories in relation to the communicative mediation between movement and words, which for Rengel is based on a representational relationship.

<sup>28</sup> Body-Space is a term that Miranda patented to refer to the theory that she systematised.

<sup>29</sup> Since its emergence at the beginning of the 20th century, topology has also been of interest to artists (Emmer, 2010). In dance it seems that the interest arose later, in the last ten years, and has been included in research by Caditz (2011), Henriques (2012), and Sicchio (2011). However none of these authors consider topology in dance from the perspective which Miranda is drawing in Body-Space, where the properties inherent in the transformation of the figures speak of transformations in a performance context.

<sup>30</sup> My own experience of research in the theme of Laban's Choreutics gives me an alternative perspective on the issue of representation in Laban praxis. During a process of investigating practically and theoretically spatial representation in Laban praxis in 2012/2013 I suggested that Laban's use of geometric figures (Choreutics) not only represented the space traced by the mover/dancer, but also housed information in itself. My work pointed out that Laban's Space Harmony is not a representation of movement, but it is a system that contains movement knowledge in itself (Scialom, 2013). The different perspectives generated on Laban's Choreutics demonstrate that Laban praxis depends on the experience and research of each individual. Other perspectives drawn over Laban's Choreutics were done by Brooks (1993), Counsell (2006), Longstaff (2000), and Sutil (2012).

<sup>31</sup> Other examples of Miranda's use of literature in her pieces are: *S. Thala* (1993) adapted from the work of the writer Marguerite Duras; *A divina comédia/Divine Comedy* of Dante Alighieri (1991); *Orfeu/Orpheus* (2005); *Tá com fome? Não to com febre/ Are you hungry? No I have a fever* adapted from poems of Eudoro Augusto (1983) (see Miranda, 2008b).

<sup>32</sup> To draw this understanding I use the Choreological Perspective (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2010) as an analytical structure.

<sup>33</sup> I used the term actors-dancers following the name of Miranda's dance company: *Compania AtoresBailarinos* Regina Miranda Actors-Dancers Company.

<sup>34</sup> While researching the Laban studies field I observed what the practitioners often repeat: that there is a lack of communication between the strands of practice. The Laban/Bartenieff strand (LMA and CMA people) do not communicate with the Laban scholars from Trinity Laban in London or the Laban Guild. The Kinetography Laban group does not communicate with other Laban-practitioners and the scholars/practitioners who do not have a diploma or institutional certification do not communicate with the Laban-institutions.

<sup>35</sup> Throughout his career Laban also sought concepts and theories to create a scientific discourse that could discuss the Art of Movement. An example of this is Laban's Choreutics which involves mathematics and geometrical laws (alongside harmony and mysticism) to create a framework for moving the body in and through space.

<sup>36</sup> My experience of the Brazilian academia of Arts disciplines is that the only positions available for lectureship are for Masters and Doctors in Arts, different from the English system, for example. The position of the specialist artist is not available and all classes are taught by the lecturers of the department. This situation is true for public (federal and state administered) institutions, which necessarily require teaching and research as part of the working contract and lectureship.



## Chapter Seven: Laban Praxis in Brazil - Subjectivation and Anthropophagy

The present condition of the Brazilian landscape of Laban praxis is a reflection of the past - of how it was learned by the local cohort of practitioners - and also suggests a launch into the future – in the way that the praxis is being re-assembled through the work of local artists. In the previous chapter I demonstrated that the body of knowledge initiated by Laban takes different forms and assumes unique characteristics which depend on the individuality and background of each practitioner. I also showed that the practitioners' activities influence the way in which Laban praxis is reinterpreted and disseminated to future generations.

In this chapter I would like to propose that the practitioners' acquisition of Laban praxis may have been influenced by the specificity of Brazil's local model of cultural appropriation; a model described as *anthropophagy*. Anthropophagy (Andrade, 1990) is a metaphor that emerged out of local artistic practice of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continues to be used nowadays to discuss Brazilian cultural (Netto, 2004) and philosophical (Rolnik, 2002) practices. It indicates the ways in which Brazilians have been merging 'external' knowledge or cultural forms with their own background.

Mario de Andrade borrowed the term (in the 1920's) from local primitive and indigenous ritualistic practices, reshaping its meaning to compose the Brazilian modern art manifesto. It aimed to clarify and support local art that merged and accommodated colonial culture with the recently independent Brazilian state (Bary, 1991: 35). In this sense anthropophagy reflects an identity or even a 'counter-identity' (Rolnik, 2000) of Brazil's cultural appropriation, as discussed throughout this chapter.

While Chapter three outlined the genealogy of Laban practices in Brazil, Chapter four suggested that the actual practice of Laban's discourse in the country is a reflection of the process of acquisition and transmission of praxis. Thus Chapter Five narrowed the

focus to introduce the lives of three specific practitioners, Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda, and Chapter Six detailed the work of these practitioners, revealing the relationship between their work and individual backgrounds. In this sense, I have shown that particular practices influence the preservation and dissemination of Laban memory in the country. This current chapter further discusses the appropriation and combination of Laban praxis in relation to the Brazilian subjectivity, focusing on how the work of Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda specifically preserves Laban's memory in the country.

Here I will also draw on Foucault's theory of subjectivation, considering the practitioners' individual discourses as the result of their internalisation/embodiment of Laban praxis. From the lens of Foucault's processes of subjectivation, the practices that emerged in Brazil as well as worldwide can be acknowledged as operations that merge Laban praxis with the individuality of the practitioners. The products of these subjectivations are then associated back to Laban's own working principles or epistemology. For this discussion I turn to Raymond Williams (1977), whose work offers a pattern to understand contemporary Laban praxis in light of its local and global use. It is the combination of an individual's subjectivation and the unique resulting practice in relation to Laban's original discourse that this chapter further explores, in order to foreground its significance and contribution to the overall field of Laban studies.

### **1. Brazilian Subjectivation of Laban Praxis**

As seen in Chapter Six, the practices of the Brazilian artists are unique to their individual history, thus directly dependent on the ways in which they absorbed Laban praxis and merged it with their own background. This pattern can be taken as a mode of subjectivation of Laban's discourse, where the internalisation or embodiment of his movement principles couple with individual backgrounds produces distinctive practices. Foucault's theory of subjectivation offers a key to understand the personal and social processes of acquisition and embodiment of knowledge. Foucault enunciates a process

whereby knowledge added to a person's experience becomes an integral part of the self. In this sense, his concept of subjectivation is related to a concern for 'how one constitutes oneself' (Flynn, 2006: 39). Foucault defined subjectivation as: 'the process by which one obtains the constitution of a subject, or more exactly, of a subjectivity, which is obviously only one of the given possibilities for organising self-consciousness' (Foucault in Kelly, 2009: 87).

The mechanism of subjectivation involves the personal adaptation of an internalised (system of) knowledge. The individual merges this system into his or her experience and background, and as a result materialises a unique or personalised version of the system. The process itself is unique to each individual, despite the possibility of a number of people subjectivating a common knowledge<sup>1</sup>, which would be the case when considering the history of Laban praxis.

Thus, I propose to take the concept of subjectivation, as Foucault himself articulated it, to inform the discussion and further understanding of contemporary Laban praxis in Brazil. In particular, the concept of subjectivation comes to illuminate not only the Brazilian practices discussed but also the global field of Laban studies. It offers a possibility to articulate the merging of Laban praxis with a wide range of frameworks and established backgrounds that currently compose what could be described as the contemporary Laban discourse.

The history of Laban's discourse already reveals this pattern. Dancers who collaborated with Laban in embodying his analytical moving praxis not only reproduced Laban's original thoughts but also worked to materialise their own concerns and physical research. This process resulted in a large number of [subjective] additions to the material, which has now been circulating worldwide for more than a century (see Chapters One and Four). For instance, the work of Kurt Jooss (Winearls, 1968) illustrates how Jooss merged Laban praxis with his own aesthetic concerns to create his Modern Dance or *Tanztheater* technique/style. In a more contemporary fashion, when merging Laban praxis with her subjective enquiry, Valerie Preston-Dunlop developed her Choreological Perspective (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2010).

The idea that each person combines Laban's praxis with their own psycho-physical background and interests suggests that certain embodiments and materialisations of Laban's discourse become distinct strands of its practice.<sup>2</sup> For instance, in addition to the strands that perpetuated the practices that Rudolf Laban proposed himself (such as *Tanztheater* and Modern Educational Dance), there are also the ones that originated from the subjectivity of Laban's collaborators (such as *Ausdruckstanz*, LMA, Dance Movement Psychotherapy and MPA). In fact, each of these strands developed after Laban's death reveals individual subjectivities and specific systems or discourses arising from Laban's epistemology. Through this I suggest that the diversity of works that emerge from subjectivations of Laban praxis maintain a link to Laban's discourse, as *Ausdruckstanz*, LMA, Dance Movement Psychotherapy and MPA have demonstrated (see also Chapter Four).

As discussed throughout this thesis, Laban praxis is a technique of the body (Mauss, 1973) that allows each person to bring Laban's movement principles to his/her own subject. Mauss was among the first to investigate the ways in which people learn and transmit movement techniques through practice, education and imitation. When associating Mauss's anthropological perspective and Foucault's theories, the learning or acquisition of a technique/practice becomes a mode of subjectivation. In this way, the movement principles subjectivated become instrumental to the subject's practice, merging into his or her original background structure.

Subjectivation has been of interest to a variety of disciplines including dance. In dance scholarship the concept is used to address individuals as the locus of experience. Subjectivity thus has become central to the emergence of dance practice and has been widely referenced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century scholarship.<sup>3</sup> However, only a small number of scholars provide an in-depth examination of the functions of subjectivity in dance practice. For instance, Sylvie Fortin (Fortin, 2008; Fortin, Vieira and Tremblay, 2009) explores the processes of subjectivation related to somatic education in dance; Barret (2007) addresses the role of subjectivity in practice-as-research; Lepecki (2006) discusses the concept of subjectivity and its functions in his analysis of dance spectacle and

choreography; and Purser (2011) analyses the composition of subjectivity through the experience of the dancers. Thus, considering this scholarship, my discussion and analysis of the role of subjectivity or how the practitioners experience and materialise (subjectivation) Laban praxis represents an important addition to the field.

The use of subjectivation to debate the phenomenon of acquisition of Laban knowledge is thus a contemporary inquiry. It addresses the ways in which each practitioner combined the knowledge with their own experience, whilst maintaining links with Laban's initial praxis. The modes of subjectivation adopted by each practitioner are related not only to the background that each has embedded as individual experience, but also on the ways in which they merge or anthropophagically 'digest' Laban knowledge into their practices. It is this 'digestive' specificity and type of subjectivation of praxis that I further discuss.

## **2. Anthropophagic Laban-Practices**

As suggested in the previous section, the subjectivation of Laban praxis is shaped according to the individual practitioner's particular background (subjectivity). In the case of the three Brazilian artists discussed in this thesis, their discourses manifest the connection of their cultural background to their modes of subjectivation of Laban praxis. In Brazil, the acquisition of cultural knowledge has been a topic discussed by local artists and social scientists who developed a unique metaphoric terminology to account for the subjectivation or appropriation of cultural forms: anthropophagy. Hence, anthropophagy also reflects the country's history of colonisation.<sup>4</sup> In fact, anthropophagy and subjectivation have a close relationship. Hence the Brazilian scholar Suely Rolnik (2000) explains that the Brazilian poet and literary critic Oswald de Andrade's *Anthropophagic Manifesto* (1922) holds similar attributes to Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari's 'mode of subjectivation'<sup>5</sup>. In this sense, Rolnik associates anthropophagy with the domain of Deleuze's subjectivity and re-defines the concept in terms of a contemporary philosophy.

Moreover Rolnik suggests that the Brazilian mode of subjectivation would be an 'anthropophagous' one (Rolnik, 2000: 461). When linking subjectivity to Andrade's Anthropophagy, Rolnik re-situates the cultural condition of the Brazilian as:

[the ones who] swallow the other, above all the admired other, in such a way that the particles of the universe of this other merge to the ones which already inhabit the subjectivity of the anthropophagist, and in the invisible chemistry of this mixture, a true mutation is produced (Rolnik, 2000: 452).

When Rolnik refers to the occurrence of a true mutation she intends to develop that in the subjectivity of the anthropophagist there is an absence of a single recognisable identity. In fact the anthropophagus act can even become the contrary of the development of an identity image (Rolnik, 2000: 452–3). This is because the cultural forms absorbed are dissolved generationally through a process of miscegenation, resulting in the absence of a hegemonic local identity (*idem*).

In these terms, the metaphor of Anthropophagy helps to develop a figurative theory that describes the ways in which Brazilian locals combine different cultural influences with their own subjectivity. Furthermore, the term reverts back to the Brazilian indigenous (*Tupy* tribes) beliefs that the anthropophagic Indians, when feeding on their enemies, were also absorbing their qualities, which would allow the cannibal to 'be affected by those desired others to the point of absorbing them into their own bodies' (Rolnik, 1998: 131). However, according to Andrade's *Anthropophagy Manifesto* (1990), the cannibal devours foreign cultures and techniques, developing a critical 'digestion' in the Brazilian stomach, and, as a result, the cultures are either assimilated or vomited out. In this sense, the digestion and/or absorption or even vomiting of the other configures a specific mode of subjectivation, whereby selected parts of this other are incorporated into the composition of the anthropophagic individual. Indeed this pattern is visible in the discourse of the Brazilian practitioners, when we consider Laban's original epistemology as the Other and the work of the Brazilian practitioners as subjectivations of Laban praxis.

The use of Anthropophagy is supported by the fact that the term emerged from Brazil's artistic and aesthetic realms, employed to conceptualise local practices of cultural appropriation. In fact, when considering the four centuries of colonisation in Brazil, the imitation (or import) of foreign (colonial) culture has been particularly noticeable (Prado in Netto, 2004: 96). For Rolnik, Anthropophagy emerged out of the need to think through the country's peculiar mode of cultural production: 'Brazilian culture was born under the sign of a variable multiplicity of references and their mixture' including many strategies of desire and exposure to alterity (Rolnik, 2000: 453). Then, the anthropophagic process aims at forging a 'new critical discourse' for local cultural studies, one that does not resemble a mere imitation (Vieira, 1998: 102).<sup>6</sup>

The two understandings of anthropophagy and subjectivation that I have offered can thus provide a framework to look at the ways in which Fernandes, Miranda and Rengel incorporate Laban praxis into their artistic, academic and pedagogical subjects. Their resulting practices correspond to modes of subjectivation of the Laban knowledge, which are unique to their individual backgrounds as scholar, pedagogue and choreographer-entrepreneur respectively.

Fernandes developed her personal praxis supported by her individual subjectivation of Laban's discourse as 'artistic above all' (Fernandes, 2012a), as well as therapeutic, educational, philosophical and diagrammatical, which Bartenieff (Bartenieff, 1980: ix) confirms as intrinsic faculties of Laban praxis. Fernandes shaped her own Laban-practice(s), placing the artistic as the central axis of all her activities (Fernandes, 2012f, 2014c), which Dörr too clearly recognises as the axis of Laban's praxis (2008).

In this sense, Fernandes's anthropophagic 'appropriation and recycling' (Vieira, 1998: 98) of Laban's artistic matter reveals not only the incorporation but her particular digestion of Laban praxis. Fernandes's appropriation also reveals her rejection or 'vomiting' of elements such as Laban's Modern Educational Dance, which are clearly absent from her epistemology (as described in Chapter Six, Section I).

Moreover, Fernandes's own background and personal life have shaped her subjectivation of Laban praxis. For example, it is most likely that her interest in therapeutic associations of Laban praxis came from her son's condition and her own experienced traumas.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Fernandes's particular pedagogical practice using Laban's discourse evidently emerged through her lecturing practice. Therefore, Fernandes's subjectivation of Laban praxis illustrates how she merged Laban knowledge with her therapeutic, artistic and pedagogical concerns.

Within a different mode of subjectivation, Rengel makes evident her particular incorporation of Laban praxis when she states that 'I don't give a class of Laban [practice], I teach a class of Lenira [Rengel]'. This statement evidences her anthropophagic process.<sup>8</sup> Her subjectivation absorbed and digested Laban's discourse, illustrating what Rolnik describes as an act of 'swallow[ing]' the admired other or merging the Other to one's own subjectivity (Rolnik, 1998: 143).

Rengel's pedagogy serves as an example of her subjectivation when she offers alternatives to Laban's terminologies with words coming from the students' experience (as described in Chapter Six, Section II). In this way, she allows Laban's original terminologies to disappear while they become physically embodied by the students. She leads the students to discover the structural potential of Laban's terminologies, using Laban's nomenclature and system of movement analysis as a scaffolding. This process of subjectivation suggests that Rengel does not stay fixed to Laban's terms (in the English language) of the 1940's. Rather she allows the subjectivity of the students to recreate a nomenclature that is meaningful to their contemporary experience, maintaining, however, Laban's theories as an underlying structure. Rengel's anthropophagy is disclosed in her freedom to use sections of Laban's theoretical framework without being faithful to his terminologies. In fact, Ronik (2002: 16) explains that this freedom of only taking up sections of a system of thought is a recurrent practice, characteristic of Brazil's mestizo culture, which represents a cultural landmark in the country.

In contrast, in Miranda's anthropophagy of Laban praxis she absorbed and merged the systematic perspectives of Bartenieff's LMA as well as Preston-Dunlop's



Choreological Studies to create her Sociochoreology practice. The four categories belonging to Miranda's Sociochoreology (Miranda, 2012) resemble the analytical roots of Laban praxis (that developed into LMA) as well as its artistic concerns (hailing from Choreological Studies). Her free interpretation and digestion of LMA and Choreological Studies categories demonstrates her particular inclination in conceptualising and categorising.

For example, it is most likely that her background as a Movement Analyst has trained her to look for the patterns present in movement, people and perhaps society or culture in general. Her analysis aims at 'finding the patterns, those things that repeat themselves and consequently are meaningful to the observer (notes from Miranda's lecture on Sociochoreology). Her subjectivation displays a unique practice that responds to her background of artistic and cultural intervention in social environments. Once again the freedom of grasping a number of elements of Laban praxis and organising them based on her own inclination reveals an anthropophagic subjectivation of Laban's discourse. It discloses how Miranda incorporated specific frameworks of two different Laban strands and combined them with her own concerns, creating a particular framework that combines art and social realms.

Altogether, the anthropophagic practices described above reflect, as the sociologist Else Vieira (1998: 95) describes, a 'very specific national experimentalism, a poetics of translation, an ideological operation as well as a critical discourse' between external influences (Laban praxis) and the practitioners' own subjectivities. Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda combine their individual incorporation of knowledge as well as the incorporated knowledge exerted into their practices, enabling the anthropophagic (or digested) product to reveal unique pluralities of the swallowed form. So, in addition to the contamination exercised by Laban's original discourse on the practitioners' work there are also the practitioners' subjectivities, which offer particular digested versions of Laban's discourse. This suggests that the subjectivity of the practitioners influences the association of Laban praxis with other knowledge, creating contemporary links and increasing the scope of the field of Laban studies, responding to local characteristics.

Anthropophagy, then, has been brought into this discussion to illuminate specific modes of subjectivation whereby the three practitioners maintain their own particularities when merging Laban praxis with their existing background. It could be argued that other international Laban practitioners equally subjectivate Laban praxis anthropophagically. Nevertheless, and regardless of the changes that emerge out of their subjectivation of Laban praxis, these practitioners still claim that what they do is not only part of the Laban scholarship but can even be considered as the Laban scholarship itself (as Fernandes particularly claimed).

### **3. Emerging, Residual and Dominant Epistemologies**

The process of subjectivation and anthropophagic incorporation of Laban praxis can be discussed in more depth by linking specific practices developed in Brazil to Laban's lifetime working principles<sup>9</sup>. In this regard, McCaw (2011: 333–347) has raised a set of principles which, as he notes, have remained a central preoccupation in Laban's discourse throughout his life. Such principles are indeed helpful, as a guiding reference to help situate the work of the Brazilian practitioners in relation to Laban's epistemology.

As discussed throughout Chapter Six the work developed by Fernandes, Miranda and Rengel often combine Laban praxis to other disciplines or theoretical fields. Through this dialogue they demonstrate the relevance of Laban's enquiries in today's movement studies scholarship. For example, Laban's interest in the body-mind conjunction is addressed with somatic practices and psychotherapy by Fernandes; Laban's interest in the social and his insistence on 'art for all' is discussed using a combination of sociology and cultural administration initiated by Miranda; Laban's interest in the linguistics and meaning of movement is revised through cognitive science and semiotics developed by Rengel.

Restoring the discussion of Laban's development of an epistemology for movement, McCaw (2011: 338) and Hodson (2001: 168) both highlight that one of the characteristics present throughout Laban's life is that he did not invent, a movement form or dance style but discovered ways of understanding, analysing and working with human movement. From my analysis, I show that the work of Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda also propose discoveries (and not inventions), which adapt Laban's discourse to contemporary enquiry. Namely, they bring together existing practices/theories into a systematic working structure that responds to specific ways of thinking/moving. In the same way that Laban discovered new connections between expressive movement, philosophy and nature, the Brazilian practitioners discovered the possibility to re-visit (or revise) Laban's epistemology in the light of contemporary interdisciplinary debate.

The relationship between Art of Movement and different disciplines is not alien to Laban praxis. Laban himself took an interdisciplinary approach, using knowledge from different disciplines in order to shed light on his movement perspective: '[Laban] allowed himself to work interdisciplinarily concerning himself with the most varied of fields including physics, anatomy, psychology, physiology, biology, and utilising them for his work' (Dörr, 2008: 191). Laban fought against the scientific reductionism of gathering together individual findings through an integration of different disciplines into his praxis. Likewise, Maletic (1987) points out a diversity of disciplines that underlie Laban's theories<sup>10</sup>. Thus it seems likely that Laban's own subjectivation of expressive movement was associated with knowledge from a variety of areas.

Examples of Laban's inter and multi-disciplinarity stand out in his own writings. In *Choreutics* (Laban, 1966: xx) Laban describes how his movement harmony was inspired by the Greek mathematicians Pythagoras and Plato, alongside music harmony theories. His personal notes (from the NRCD) point to studies in physics, the history of physical thought and quantum theory (Laban, n.d.), as well as a number of musical scores, all demonstrating his multiple interests.

With similar multidisciplinary input Fernandes sees her work structured over the tripod of dance theatre, Authentic Movement and Bartenieff Fundamentals. In this sense,

Fernandes's epistemology crosses over three disciplines: the understanding of the body as a soma - whole and unified, artistic practice, and research framework. Her association expands Laban's epistemology to embrace academic research, which Laban had not achieved himself.

The extension of the boundaries of Laban's epistemology is not unique to Laban's overall scholarship. Other established Laban practitioners have expanded the range of Laban praxis, not only applying the knowledge to a wide range of subject areas<sup>11</sup>, but adding novel information to Laban's discourse. The most eminent examples of the latter are situated in the work of Irmgard Bartenieff who introduced Laban's epistemology to somatics (Bartenieff Fundamentals) and physiotherapy (Bradley, 2009: 94), as well as to movement behaviour (Choreometrics) (Bartenieff, Paulay and Lomax, 1972). Another example comes from Warren Lamb, who deepened the analytical faculty of Laban's discourse to survey humans' behaviour through their inherent movement patterns, developing his own Movement Pattern Analysis method (McBride, 2010). Finally, Valerie Preston-Dunlop (2010a) developed categories beyond Laban's framework, integrating Laban's discourse into the creation and analysis of contemporary dance theatre (Choreological Studies). Therefore these examples demonstrate how movement analysis and practice merged with individual interests to become contemporary Laban-epistemologies.

Similarly Fernandes introduced an emerging epistemology that proposes a contemporary perspective to Laban's original body of knowledge. These epistemological shifts can be investigated through the lens of cultural transformations enunciated by the Cultural Studies scholar Raymond Williams. Williams (1977: 121) developed a framework to understand the 'internal dynamic relations of any actual process'; the ways in which culture operates, considering its continuous development. Williams's theory proposes a way to view and situate cultural developments according to their dominance, residuality or emergence in a specific cultural realm. Through Williams's framework, Fernandes's discourse offers an emergent prospect to Laban praxis, as it is the development of a set of practices that challenge the scope of the dominant and existing residual Laban praxis.

It could be considered an emergent practice of Laban's discourse, in the sense that Williams defines emergent: as the continual creation of 'new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships, and kinds of relationships', which 'represent areas of human experience, aspiration and achievement which the dominant culture neglects...' (Williams, 1977: 123–4).

Fernandes's discourse then evidences an emergent epistemology of Laban's discourse. Her publications reflect her own voice (Fernandes, 2012a) as she argues for the use of arts *in* and *as* research (such as Fernandes, 2014c) - which is a step beyond Laban who claimed Art of Movement as an integrating part of the scientific realm (Laban, 1966). Laban himself did not arrive at conceptualising art as a mode of investigating other fields, as Fernandes is proposing. Fernandes combines the knowledge that comes from the artistic practice in academic-research environments with Laban's discourse. It is a type of knowledge which, according to Fernandes 'is built from the doing' (Fernandes, 2012a). Still, when Fernandes claims that what she does is Laban, she reveals her awareness of Laban's own practice as a mode of researching human expression through his analytical framework.

At the same time, Fernandes's praxis not only reveals an emerging epistemology for the Laban scholarship but also demonstrates a strong residual content of Laban's original epistemology. Williams (1977: 122) sees the emergent as recurring elements of the past in a culture's present. In this sense Laban's original discourse pledged the use of movement practice as a means to investigate movement. According to Preston-Dunlop (Preston-Dunlop, 2010b: 8), Laban insisted on integrating theory and practice in the lived experience of moving and researching. Preston-Dunlop recollects Laban's words: 'I am not a human doing, nor a human thinking, but a human being, involved in the phenomenal lived and integrating experience that moving is' (*idem*). When assuming a similar stance, Fernandes reveals Laban praxis as residual in her discourse, stating that her being is the source of her doing and thinking (Fernandes, 2012g). For instance, during field research, while sitting with Fernandes on the beach and talking about university affairs, I noted that:

she would go out to the water for a swim and would come back with a new idea. It was as if the motion, the changes of weight and flow movement pattern of the body to adapt into the water would be allowing her to reshape her thinking pattern and seek other access points to what she wanted to make links with. This looks like part of her somatic practice of researching in performing arts. (notes from field)

These notes revealed to me that the changes of movement patterns resulting from the body inside and outside of the water were feeding her thoughts. This situation evidenced that her body in motion was part of her thinking whereas a leisure activity incited a moving-thinking process.

A strong residual content is also evident in Rengel's activities. Her practice can be seen as an example of the development of a contemporary perspective associated with Laban's pedagogical inclination. Seeing herself as a teacher 'above all' (Rengel, 2012a) demonstrates an identification with Rudolf Laban, as she points out that Laban was also more known for his career as a 'progressive instructor' than as a dancer (*idem*). In this sense, the work that Rengel develops for the qualification of school and dance teachers stands in parallel to Laban's own practice, especially during his period in England (from 1938 to 1958) when he shifted his attention to the development of his Modern Educational Dance. Responding to the English market's need for developing (physical) educators and teacher training, Laban invested his efforts in developing a curriculum which included dance as an educational discipline (Buck, 2006: 706; Laban, 1963; Nicholas, 2004: 123; Thornton, 1971: v). Similar to Laban, Rengel has also been developing frameworks to train teachers, whereas her knowledge comes from her own experience of teaching and working with Laban praxis; from her own 'self-taught' background of teaching dance (Rengel, 2012a).

To organise the development of her pedagogical praxis Rengel merged (subjectivated) a Darwinist evolution framework into her repertoire (Rengel, 2007b, 2009). She hints at this association when she claims: 'I only think like this, evolutionally', while explaining the adaptation of her teaching strategies over the years, materialising a

pedagogical 'evolution pattern' (Rengel, 2012a). When Rengel assumes the Darwinist perspective she defends language not as cultural artefact but as part of human biological structure that adapts itself to its local conditions to transmit information. Rengel claims that language co-evolves together 'with thinking, behaviour and environment' (Rengel, 2009: 2). In this sense, Rengel's practice not only references Laban's discourse (residuality) but also reflects the discourse's own evolution, according to its time and environment.

The association of Darwin's scripts (addressing movement, meaning and evolution) with Dance Studies is not new (Goodall, 2002; Daly, 1988). Ann Daly points out that in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Darwin was already reporting his investigations on the subject of movement and meaning, and was thus perhaps a precursor to Laban's movement analysis enterprise (Daly, 1988: 40–1). However, Dörr (2003: 2) explains that Darwin's theories supported Laban's rising ideology. These links between Darwin and Laban support Rengel's re-association of Darwin's theories to Laban praxis which I believe that, when combined with semiotic studies, become Rengel's *Laban Dictionary*.

Through her Dictionary, Rengel introduced her concern over the combination of words and movement. In fact, the understanding of movement as a language (thus producing meanings) is also a recurring debate in Laban praxis (see Bradley, 2009: 65).<sup>12</sup> Laban himself claimed that movement is one of 'man's languages' (Laban, 1966: vii), which expresses 'those deep and essential things which can only be stated by the dance' (Laban in Partsch-Bergsohn, 1994: 139). When considering the relationship of movement and language (as a way to produce meanings), Sidnell (2008: 39) adds that Laban was one of the theatrical practitioners who has thoroughly examined and developed the 'semiotic art of theatre'. In fact, as an apprentice of Laban, Warren Lamb devised a treatise on the ways in which human movement (behaviour) produces meaning (Lamb, 1979). These examples demonstrate that the concern with human movement as a source of communication is also inherent in Laban's discourse, linking Rengel's work back to Laban praxis.

Thus, Rengel's interest in the investigation of language responds not only to the perspective of having movement as a form of communication but also to the ways in which verbal language can be articulated for the teaching of dance (Rengel, 2007b). In fact, when discussing movement and communication, I claim that Rengel's enquiry (Rengel and Ferreira, 2012) stands on similar ground to Laban's own. This is because Rengel sees movement in dance as a type of 'metaphorical scripture' (*idem*: 20), which inscribes 'actions of memory in becoming'. And this is where her interests in semiotics comes forth. Rengel's semiotics interests led her to the understanding that what matters is not what she thinks but what she 'argues towards', which indicates, according to her, a 'knowledge relationship' of meaning-making with whatever she is debating (Rengel, 2012a). This thinking strategy is also a way of avoiding the demand of a conceptual structure, allowing an idea to be tested and experienced: an attitude which Rengel maintains in her daily pedagogical practice (as explained in Chapter Six, Section II).

The combination of Laban's epistemology with semiotic thinking and Darwin's evolutionary framework offers an emerging discourse out of her own pedagogical practice (remembering that her practice preceded her research). This is because it reveals a novel association between Laban praxis and other disciplines as well as an enquiry into dance as a form of communication. Nonetheless the links with Laban's original discourse are still retained, even though Rengel herself does not discuss her discoveries, but rather allows her practice to make them evident.

In contrast to Rengel, Miranda claims the novelty of her discourse. However, her links to Laban praxis differ from the previous examples. Earlier I proposed that emerging and residual practices have embedded a component which links a person's work back to Laban's working principles. Miranda's practice, on the contrary, does not reveal these links. Although both Sociochoreology and Body-Space are a practice and a philosophical reflection (respectively) emerging out of Miranda's individual enquiries and subjectivation of Laban praxis, they do not reflect a specific principle inherent to Laban's discourse (as the work of Fernandes and Rengel have both revealed).



Miranda's *Body-Space* is, as she claims, an extension of Laban's spatial thinking as revealed in his Choreutics theory (Miranda, 2008). To build over Laban's Choreutics theories (space traced by the body in motion) Miranda developed a praxis supported by Lacan's psychoanalysis. Her discourse aims to create a concept of space that refers to 'movement that derives from transformations' as in the transformations that occur in topological figures (notes from Miranda's class on Sociochoreology). These movements are not products of the body in motion but of a movement that is developed out of individual or shared relationships of self and the 'multiple intensities articulated among themselves'<sup>13</sup> (Miranda, 2008b: 69). In her theories she does not specify the movement content of these relationships and how they develop spatial patterns. This mismatch between hers and Laban's enquiries, in my opinion, reveals not an emerging epistemology within Laban praxis but independent research, which is nevertheless inspired by Laban's discourse. Similarly despite Sociochoreology's attempt to extend Laban's Choreology to a cultural arena (Miranda, 2011: 2), it does not clearly demonstrate the composition of an emerging epistemology of Laban praxis. Nonetheless it is an interdisciplinary discovery that emerges out of the combination of Laban and Preston-Dunlop's Choreology, Performance Studies and social activity (described in the previous chapter).

What I observe in Miranda's work is the expression of Laban's dominant discourse, which is reflected in the institutional duties she holds. The term dominant discourse in relation to Laban praxis is the result of my own review of the power-knowledge relationships in the field. For Williams (1977: 125), the dominant is that which guarantees a cultural continuity and excludes the personal or private. In Laban scholarship I believe that dominant would stand for the normalisation of Laban praxis secured by the different Laban institutions (described in the first chapter as the institutions that regulate and award certificates/diplomas of Laban-related studies). In this sense the institutions secure an educational working framework that imposes a strand of practice and narrows the possibilities for questioning and challenging existing discourses (as I experienced myself during my SDCS course)<sup>14</sup>.

As Miranda is a member of the executive board of the well-known LIMS and director of the Laban-specialist course in Rio de Janeiro, it would be curious if she did not bring out the institutional values which reign in the framework for training certified Laban/Bartenieff-practitioners. Miranda reveals the reminiscent dominant discourse in different activities. For example, she strongly advises her students to finish the training initiated in Brazil at the LIMS in the USA (notes from informal talk with the students of Miranda's postgraduate course). This demonstrates her attempt to disseminate Laban's discourse and the constructed value of a certificate. Also, in her class on ethics Miranda defended the Laban/Bartenieff 'language' and its discursive power (notes from Miranda's class on ethics), which in my opinion also reflects the insistence on a dominant discourse.

Attempting to combine the possibility of her emerging practice with the support of the institutional dominance is where I notice that Miranda's comments on ethics in Laban practice emerge. Her development of a code of ethics for Laban (Movement Analysis) practice merged with her own proposal of advancements to Laban's discourse creates a paradox. This paradox lies in the association of her institutional discourse with her personal praxis of the emergent (copyrighted) frameworks of Sociochoreology and Body-Space<sup>15</sup>. She reveals a double enterprise of proposing a 'new' perspective of Laban praxis (associated with Sociochoreology and Body-Space) and at the same time tries to secure the canon of Laban's discourse. The combination of different (and at times contradicting) impetus reveals Miranda's anthropophagic character and an 'identity resistance' (Rolnik, 2002: 15) of assuming a single personality and ethics of practice. This paradox could be a reflection of her subjectivation of Laban praxis that merges her anthropophagic spirit of swallowing and digesting the other (thus creating her own epistemology), while securing her institutional duty to sustain the dominant discourse.

My intention is not to argue that dominant Laban praxis neglects emerging practices. The acceptance, however, of emerging practices and practitioners in the field depends on a set of circumstances which could be situated within power structure relationships. For example, these could involve the acknowledgement of practitioners and scholars in events and international publications of institutions or individuals who propose

emerging epistemologies to the field. From my experience more often than not this acknowledgement does not happen.<sup>16</sup> Another example is that people who do not hold specific Laban-related diplomas are not accepted in specific circles (which situation I experienced myself in diverse occasions).

Finally, the interrelationships between dominant discourses held by the institutions (that award certifications and diplomas), the emerging epistemologies and the residual of Laban's original discourse reveal different and consistent links to Laban's original framework. However, the anthropophagic subjectivation of Laban praxis does not always provide a clear categorisation of the practices developed. The assembling of emerging and residual epistemologies to Laban's original praxis suggests that they could still be considered as Laban discourse themselves. Furthermore, the new epistemologies emerging from Brazil reflect the local demand to develop contemporary modes of inquiry which support individual practices and research. Therefore Laban's contemporary discourse could be proposed as a network between dominant, emergent and residual, aiming to keep the heritage of Laban praxis circulating in a variety of forms.

#### **4. Integration of Movement as Artistic Practice into Society and Education**

A residual theme throughout Laban's life was his work with (and directed at) the community (Hand, 2015). This theme is now evident in the interest that the Brazilian Laban-practitioners have demonstrated in developing movement practice involving community work. In fact McCaw believes that the integration of recreational and celebratory dances into a person's life and education was a recurrent principle throughout Laban's professional life (2011: 339). This implies that in Laban's perspective a person's life, work and recreation should all be interrelated and integrated within their community.

Equally, there are a number of Brazilian Laban-practitioners who demonstrate an active interest in the social aspects of movement. Amongst those mentioned in the second

chapter, Isabel Marques, Lenira Rengel, Mariangela Melcher, Regina Miranda, Renata Macedo Soares, Solange Arruda and Uxa Xavier indicated that their work includes activities which aim at promoting individual and community wellbeing. Undoubtedly one of the main concerns demonstrated in the Brazilian Laban-practitioners' overall discourse is the empowerment of citizens through community dance activities (Scialom, 2009).

Perhaps the fullest expression of Laban's interest in the social was materialised in his movement choirs, which he saw as a way of empowering citizens. According to Maletic (1987: 14) Laban conceived his laymen dances as 'a medium providing an experience of togetherness, as community through dance' emphasising that 'besides the experience of joyful movement, the crucial task of the movement choirs was to maintain a sense of humanity in a dignified form'. Laban explains that he valued communal festive culture because it is a way of 'deepening the sense of mutuality and the appreciation of the personal identity of each individual' (Laban, 1975: 84).<sup>17</sup> Dörr (2003: 2) adds that Laban's interest in the community may have emerged from his philosophical encounters with 'liberal ideas implicit in Darwin's teachings', which contributed to a philosophy that feeds the romantics, bringing about a new conception of community. Undoubtedly, Laban's interest in the social reflected contemporary debates of his time, embracing education and celebratory practices, fostering links between expression and daily life, or the practice of expressive movement beyond the theatrical stage.

Rengel and Miranda reveal similar interests in community and the integration of Laban's movement principles into general life, leisure and education. Despite this common residue of Laban's discourse, the political scope of their practices is significantly different. A comparable interest in the community and its enhancements through artistic practice is evident in Miranda's work. Combining artistic and leadership work, Miranda's Sociochoreology has brought together artists with community, laymen and business entrepreneurs in a social-artistic-entrepreneurial practice. With Sociochoreology Miranda demonstrates a close interest in the dynamics outside the studio. She has shifted her focus from a studio/theatrical practice to culture and people's daily lives (revealed in the chronology of her activities and career).

From her artistic practice, Miranda has found ways of intervening in social structures. It all starts from her 'propositional gesture'<sup>18</sup> (Miranda, 2013) which is 'taken over' and developed by the people involved in each project. Indeed, Miranda's artistic practice preceded and inspired her work with the community, despite the fact that her interest in the social has always been present in her life as a result of her upbringing (Miranda, 2008a). From the practice with her dance company she moved into more overarching activities, working together with neighbourhoods and cities. As a result, she systematised a method of engaging both artists and non-artists (from street dwellers to entrepreneurs) to develop creative strategies tailored for a specific place, neighbourhood or situation. This is how her Sociochoreology emerged: as a 'systematic map for the understanding of social rituals, from the most ordinary practices to the most codified movement events' (Miranda, 2011). In fact, Miranda has fully integrated Sociochoreology into her professional title as she calls herself a 'Laban Sociochoreologist'<sup>19</sup>.

Miranda is aware of the transformative power of her social (Choreological) practice as 'every human being embodies a creative potential that can be unleashed and turned to valuable ends' (Miranda, 2011: 1). Then, she perceives her work as part of the global 'challenge of building creative ecosystems with the potential to empower people's creativity on a large scale' (*idem*: 2). Furthermore she believes in the artistic as the centre point of the transformation of communities, creating 'synergies within and across communities' (Miranda; 2011:5). For Miranda creativity comes from the people (*idem*: 9).

Miranda developed a discourse to support her practice, reflecting her quest for entrepreneurial partnerships to support (financially) her projects, which, as she points out, 'require more than a little money' (Miranda, 2013). An example of such discourse is her statement that 'Sociochoreology makes it possible to identify innovative solutions capable of bringing positive effects that can leverage improvement throughout the whole community' (Miranda, 2011: 5). Hence Miranda's discursive refinement to support social practices is very similar to Laban's own enterprise in the 1920's and 1930's when he strived to sell his choir dances to the German government, as Kew (1999) described.

Kew (1999: 76) recalls that Laban also included education and festive culture in his community dances, reflecting the contemporary philosophy of his time. In fact, for Laban these community practices were the only means of achieving a 'body-mind' education (Maletic, 1987: 14). In a similar manner, Rengel's interests in social practices lie in her work driven to enhance people's well-being through dance practice. It is through her pedagogical practice that her actions reach larger communities. Rengel's pedagogy reveals a constant preoccupation with the development of individuals within a society. Also, her non-dualistic thinking (Rengel, 2007b) enhances her integration plan.

As a consequence of Rengel's extensive practice, she has not only taught people of all ages (from children to elderly), but also a great number of her publications are directed at enhancing the pedagogical dance practice of school teachers (Rengel, 1991, 2006, 2007a, 2010). In fact, her teaching also aims at training future dance instructors, which reflects her interest not only in the well-being of the community but also in extending the outreach of movement education. I compare this action to Laban's interest in educating movement choir leaders in order to disseminate communal dance practice (Laban, 1975).

A highlight in Rengel's classes is her enthusiasm for teaching. Similarly McCaw recalls that 'Laban was passionate about integrating movement into a person's education' (McCaw 2011: 339). This is evident in the way she guides the students to understand and discover the manifestation of spatial and dynamic movement principles in their bodies. Her own enthusiasm inspires the students to approach movement with similar energy (as I experienced in her classes). In addition, her pedagogy and efforts to enhance the general access to dance in educational environments demonstrate an underlying interest in developing dance practice in the community and the educational process in itself.

Even though Rengel and Miranda's practices lack a direct connection to Laban's movement choir form, they nonetheless mirror his interest in education, well-being and the development of society. This fosters the connection of Rengel and Miranda's social and educational activities with Laban's overall discourse, revealing a residual of Laban's discourse in their subjective practices.

It is important to highlight that the practices described were adapted to the Brazilian cultural and economic spheres. For example, Rengel's workbooks on educational dance teaching in schools respond to the local law, which requires dance to be part of the arts curriculum; and Miranda's Creative Cities project is adapted to the circumstances of Rio de Janeiro. Their subjectivation of Laban's educational praxis associates Laban's discourse with contemporary theories of administration and social science, such as Miranda's citations of Adams and Golbard (2005) and Lowe (2000), and cognitive science, such as Rengel's reference to Lakoff and Johnson (1999).

In conclusion, the residual concern with social work together with the anthropophagic subjectivation of the Brazilian practitioners have fostered the development of unique educational, artistic and leadership practices that have Brazilian social concerns as a focal point. The combination of the theoretical and practical tradition established by Laban with novel theories and local social conditions enable the emergence of practices that respond to local needs. Thus their practices reflect a non-dualistic premise which, as a residual of Laban's original discourse, surpasses the original form, set up during Laban's own activities. This introduces a renewed praxis scheme that embraces the possibilities necessary for specific working principles to materialise themselves in Brazil's cultural realm.

## **5. Integration of Theory and Practice: Overcoming Dualism**

The combination of theory and practice is a common feature amongst the diverse range of Laban-related practices. Furthermore, the enthusiasm towards the integration of theory and practice is a residual preoccupation of Laban's discourse reflected in the work of the Brazilian artists. As mentioned earlier, to overcome dualism and merge movement with conceptual thinking the Brazilian practitioners have created unique frameworks that respond to Laban's original discourse and take a step further to integrate Laban's epistemology into their local realities. Hence, they reveal their non-dualistic drive through a discourse tailored by their personal experience.

One of Laban's founding principles was the endeavour to develop an understanding of theory (conceptualisation) and movement as a joint activity (McCaw, 2011: 388). In this sense, McCaw perceives Laban's attitude as 'surprisingly contemporary when demanding, the simultaneous exercise of practice and theory, body and mind' (*idem*). Preston-Dunlop (2013b: 1) agrees that '[Laban's] whole endeavour was to promote the integration of theory and practice of expressive movement in all its forms'. She emphasises that 'in the Laban tradition where there is no distinction made between practice and theory, both operate in the moment of creative dancing' (*idem*: 3). Bradley (2009: 66) highlights that throughout Laban's entire career from Ascona (Switzerland) to England he worked towards the 'reconciliation of theory and practice'. In fact Carr (2010) and Huxley (2010) agree that Laban's theories are part of the foundations of non-dualistic thinking in dance. These statements highlight Laban's particular impetus to merge practice and theory.

Despite the fact that a number of scholars point to Laban's main concerns as a non-dualistic enterprise, after analysing Laban's literature Sutil defines Laban's theory of movement as 'profoundly dualistic' (2013: 175). Sutil, however, fails to support his claim with practical evidence from an embodied experience of this dualism. The lack of practical experience with Laban praxis reduces the credibility of his statement, as we have seen earlier that Laban praxis requires a lived experience to be understood (Laban, 1966: ix). Madden and Gantz (1990: 118) confirm this when they acknowledge that Laban found in the 'praxis' a way to 'connect mind and body and integrating them into a synthesized vision of wholeness'.

Responding to similar non-dualistic concerns, the three Brazilian practitioners have been investing in producing combinations of practice and theory through the development of their interdisciplinary discourses. Supported by Somatics, Cognitive Science and Topology, each artist has demonstrated an underlying and structural concern with non-dualistic thinking/practice. This means that their work too proposes renewed perspectives on Laban praxis through a combination of contemporary theories circulating in current scientific and artistic discourses.



Other Laban practitioners have also embarked on similar mission to revise Laban's non-dualistic concern (Carr, 2010; Madden and Gantz, 1990).<sup>20</sup> However, they have not proposed a practice based on contemporary scholarship to develop their discourses. The discipline of Somatics (through the work of Bartenieff, 1980; Hackney, 2010; and Cohen, 1993) has been the sole area where I have found evidence of a discussion that engages contemporary scholarship in debates on Laban's non-dualistic proposal. In this sense, I can claim that the work of the Brazilian artists remains innovative.

The Brazilian practitioners are aware of the relationship of their activities to Laban's praxis. For example, Fernandes perceives that the integration of academic enquiry to her artistic practice (and vice-versa) corresponds to Laban's discourse (Fernandes, 2012a). For Fernandes, Laban's approach to combining practice with theory is a 'type of approach [that] generates everything' (*idem*) and it is from this principle that she develops her work. This is made evident in most of her publications where, more often than not, she merges her experiences (of performance, teaching and even travelling) with current academic scholarship. Furthermore this has become a pattern in her work, reflecting in her academic-artistic identity.

In fact, Fernandes considers that her initial formal dance training began from this integration principle, claiming that both her research and artistic training occurred together (Fernandes, 2012a). She emphasises that during her formal education, the fact that she was actually investigating dance theatre enhanced the fusion of practice and theory, relating her work straight to Laban's discourse, as for Laban 'theory and practice did not have this separation' (*idem*). She understands that:

[the] process was done through Laban, who traverses these two fields [of theory and practice] in a complementary manner. For me the core of his work is there in the real time association of practice and theory (Fernandes, 2012a).

In this sense, Fernandes associates the development of senses, connections and interrelations between herself and her research, her art and the environment with which

she performs. Fernandes's associations of art, environment and research (Fernandes, 2014c, 2012g, 2013f, 2013a) are also principles of Laban praxis. This became evident during her presentation of a paper at a conference where she insisted on materialising her practice during the presentation, instead of only describing it orally (notes from Fernandes's presentation at IFTR 2014 University of Warwick, UK). Other examples can be found in Fernandes's discourse where she merges quotes from her theoretical references with her artistic experience, allowing her work to become the embodiment of her own and others' conceptual thinking (as in Fernandes, 2013c).

In order to develop a non-dualistic practice, Fernandes imports Bartenieff's Fundamentals and principles of 'learning through the body' into her own framework. She gives an example: 'we learn how to think from the lizard movement, from the upper and lower,<sup>21</sup> from these movements. You can't learn from sitting on the chair' (Fernandes, 2012a). She specifically directs her discourse to refer to the way academic research has evolved to a point where scholars and students 'abandon' their bodies to sit and write (*idem*). Fernandes calls this 'the symptom of an occult illness' that comes from a normative academic regime. Avoiding this pitfall, she instigates her postgraduate (masters and doctorate) students to move while they explore their personal research enquiries (as I observed in her classes which take place within the studio space).

Fernandes's SPR is thus another example of her mission to merge thought and movement. When she asks the students a question and requests an answer through a non-verbal medium, she is already introducing the principle of integration into her practice. In a similar attempt to merge thought and movement, Rengel's practice of writing words and concepts during her dance classes demonstrates her non-dualistic intent. With the practice of writing while moving Rengel seeks the combination of movement, expression and words in a continuous flowing process of mind-body (or *bodymind* as Rengel conceptualised it), integrated and working together, or what Fraleigh (1996: 9) has described as a 'minded body'.

In fact, Rengel highlights that the body *is* already integrated as body-mind (Rengel, 2009: 5). She explains that Cognitive Science had already identified this fact through in-

vivo laboratory research. Furthermore Rengel adds that she chose the Cognitive Science paradigm to support what she had already experienced in her long term pedagogy: that mind and body exist within an integrated system. She recalls that there are a number of alternative terminologies that attempt to name this integration. She believes, however, that most of them are insufficient to cover the state of integration of the body-mind. Thus Rengel's concept of *corponectividade* translated to *bodynectivity* (fusion of body and connectivity) is an attempt to fill the gap (*idem*).

Likewise, Miranda perceives this minded body as an inscription of movement principles in the body, which for her represents exactly that which the 'Laban System' (Miranda, 2013) stands for. Yet in her pedagogical discourse, while attempting to combine body and mind (practice and theory) Miranda inadvertently separates them, as she assumes that there is a System that exists outside of the body and which needs to be embodied through individual practice. Miranda explains that the embodiment or what she calls 'incarnation' is part of Laban's philosophy (notes from Miranda's Body-Space lecture, January 2013). However, Miranda solves the paradox in *Body-Space*, creating a new term in Portuguese to denote the word embodiment: *incorporação*. For Miranda (2008b: 42) this term is a combination of three different elements: *(in)corpo(ação)* which would be translated as (towards inside)body(action). She explains that the proposal of the term *(in)corpo(ação)* or *incorporação* suggests a concept that emphasises the physicalisation of the inner-outer connections and intensities manifested by each person (*idem*). This terminology demonstrates her concern with developing and translating into Portuguese a non-dualistic thinking of her discourse and pedagogy.

Returning to the idea of Laban praxis as an embodied philosophy, Miranda adds that Laban's concepts involve a process of *incorporação*, which could be seen as quite distant from traditional philosophy. This is because 'traditional philosophy limits itself to the brain space while in Laban the philosophy is incarnated' (notes from field). The recognition of Laban praxis as a philosophy and its comparison with traditional philosophy is not a unique discussion in the field. Connolly and Lathrop (1997) have discussed and wisely compared Laban's thoughts to the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty

(previously suggested by Maletic, 1987), while Dörr (2003) gives a similar yet more detailed account on Laban's philosophy of dance or 'Choreosophy'.

Miranda's *Body-Space* (2008b) also seems to develop a non-dualistic praxis through the use of specific topological figures as representations of her discourse. The figures chosen - the torus, the Borromean knot and the Moebius strip - do not present a distinction between their inner and outer surfaces. For Miranda these figures represent states of the body that are 'inside-outside of itself' (2008b: 33) offering a non-dualistic idea of considering everything that is outside and inside the body as a single entity.

In regards to the practice of Miranda's *incorporação*, *Body-Space* provides an example of performances where her theories are clearly illustrated (Miranda, 2008b). Despite these descriptions, Miranda does not provide instructions for the materialisation of her discourse. This means that while reading her theoretical work I did not find substantial clues on how to apply her conceptual thinking in practice.

All in all, although Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda cover a range of disciplines, the work of all three reveals a residue of Laban's discourse, which was introduced in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From the individual subjectivation of Laban's non-dualistic project emerge different possibilities of merging theory and practice in current artistic, educational and academic environments. Laban's discourse not only continues to trigger contemporary practice, but also maintains ground for enquiry to develop itself in diverse realms, as the work of the Brazilian practitioners has demonstrated.

## **6. Practices of Memory of Laban Praxis**

As discussed, Laban praxis has residual content, exerts dominance or even provides a field for emerging epistemologies in the work of Brazilian artist-researchers. However, the memory produced by these residuals, dominant or emergent practices assumes varied forms. To discuss some of these variations I return to Joseph Roach's

(1996) practices of memory and Diana Taylor's (2003) archive/repertoire. If in the fourth chapter these theories were used to give a general understanding of the transmission and genealogy of Laban praxis in the country, here I bring this framework back to discuss the types of memory generated by different subjectivations of Laban's discourse. Not only this allows an understanding of how the work of each practitioner manifests Laban praxis in relation its overall field of practice, but moreover it illuminates how Laban praxis may be transferred as memory to future generations of practitioners in Brazil.

In Chapter Six I detailed the practices developed in Brazil where Laban's discourse is present, referenced and labelled as such either through written citation or through verbal or non-verbal creative or educational practices. As argued in Chapter Four, these practices contribute to generating and sustaining the memory of Laban praxis in the country. In the residual, emerging or dominant practices the reference to Laban praxis, however, is not always obvious. In this case, even residual practices can be effaced as a habitus and become a forgotten reference in a genealogical line, as I will discuss.

Archive and repertoire are generated in either the emerging, residual or dominant practices. If archives are composed of books, papers, programme notes, video documentation (Taylor, 2003), which include Laban's name and discourse matter (as publications), repertoire is when Laban's movement principles are learned through their physical training and replicated as embodied knowledge (as I have observed in the pedagogy of the Brazilian practitioners when, for example, Fernandes suggest exercises of movement scales, or Rengel leads improvisation with dynamics or Efforts). Most importantly, Taylor (2003) enunciates that both archive and repertoire are conveyors of memory.

Residual memory of Laban has been guaranteed primarily by the publications of Fernandes (Fernandes, 2000a, 2006a), Regal (Rengel, 2003, 2008b) and Miranda (1980) who introduced textbooks that revise Laban's discourse, offering a documentation of their unique subjectivation and conceptualisations of Laban praxis. These textbooks reflect their intension to instruct and thus perpetuate the heritage of Laban praxis in their subjective manner. They enable Laban's theories to be transmitted to future generations

of practitioners, thus supporting the archive of local Laban-related scholarship. For instance, Rengel's articles on dance education for school teachers (Rengel, 1991, 2007a), as well as her book (Rengel, 2008b), create an image of Laban praxis as an educational tool for dance teaching. It seems most likely that the people who are introduced to Laban from this perspective will hold that it is a praxis related to education. In contrast if we consider Fernandes's dance theatre perspective of Laban praxis (Fernandes, 2000a), it is most likely that this will result in Laban being perceived as a praxis related to arts and research.

However, it is not only through written publications that the memory of Laban is secured in Brazil. Subjective practices also contribute to developing a memory of Laban in the country. The teaching practices of Rengel and Fernandes are examples of this. While Rengel stresses the memory of Laban predominantly in an educational environment, Fernandes contributes to generating memory from an artistic (dance theatre) and pedagogical perspective, and Miranda generates memory within an institutional/educational realm.

Parallel to the generation of memory, the individual subjectivation of Laban praxis also enables a forgetting of Laban's traditional discourse. This is nonetheless, knowledge as a form of repertoire (Taylor, 2003), an environment of memory (Nora, 1989), or a memory that is stored as practice (Roach, 1996: 26). Contrasting with the production of memory discussed above, the repertoire that sets a forgetting of Laban praxis is characterised by the absence of direct references, citation and the titles of original scholarship (as discussed in Chapter Four).

When the subjectivation and embodiment of knowledge becomes an ontological complicity and a kind of knowledge without the subject's conscious awareness it resembles Pierre Bourdieu's (2000) concept of habitus. For Bourdieu, habitus is the product of an inclusion and appropriation of cultural elements which become reproducible without the subject's conscious awareness (Bourdieu, 2000: 282). The process of forgetting or becoming a habitus is evidenced when the practitioners 'displace' or adapt Laban's epistemology following contemporary philosophy or trends (Roach, 1996: 28) as

well as when they refashion the original content to encompass their individual subjectivity. This is the case of Fernandes's SPR where she used Laban praxis to structure and support her epistemology. However, most of her students are not aware that they are dealing with Laban (as I noticed in her classes). This is validated by the fact that they make reference to SPR but not Laban<sup>22</sup>. This means that Laban praxis has become a habitus in Fernandes's SPR, and Laban's discourse is thus forgotten. Miranda's Sociochoreology reveals a similar pattern where, despite stating her connections with Laban's discourse, the product of her praxis does not advocate a canon of Laban practice (as already discussed).

The adaptation of a historic practice according to its contemporary dynamics configures a transmission of knowledge that is integrated in both Fernandes's and Miranda's activities. Miranda's Sociochoreology and Body-Space could be said to collapse the links with the original heritage, proposing a different type of practice than the one predicted by Laban's original praxis. Consequently this process configures her own transmission of Laban knowledge, which may eventually be effaced by future generations of practitioners who chose to depart not from Laban but from Miranda's praxis.<sup>23</sup> In both these examples, when considering SPR and *Sociochoreology*, the residual of Laban praxis in their surrogation practices is not obvious and is bound to become invisible or forgotten when transmitted to future generations of practitioners.

When addressing the Brazilian practitioners' work from the types of memory of Laban praxis that they offer, I propose that their work determines Laban's memory in the local sphere and, at the same time, prescribes the future of its heritage in Brazil. This depends on the ways in which the material was and is being established - through archive, repertoire or 'forgetting'. It then affects the maintenance of the heritage, which will not only remain under the name of 'Laban' but also under different names such as SPR and *Body-Space*.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the future of Laban's heritage is directly related to the types of memory emerging from the subjectivation of local artists. This means that, for instance, people who learn Laban praxis from Fernandes, Rengel or Miranda most likely will develop an initial

understanding of the knowledge based on their subjectivation and not the original praxis. This process reinforces Laban praxis as a habitus, where, further down the genealogical line, the discourse can become unrecognisable.<sup>25</sup>

I claim that either through memory - archival or repertoire - or through forgetting (through the presence and absence of references to the original discourse), the Brazilian practices secure the continuity of Laban praxis in the country. In addition, these practices respond to contemporary enquiries, in the same way that Laban responded to enquiries of his time (Dörr, 2003). In this regard, Williams reminds us that 'no generation speaks quite the same language as its predecessors' (Williams, 1977: 131). This means that each generation or community of Laban practitioners will shape the memory of Laban praxis in different ways not excluding their subjectivities. Thus, Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda, who took Laban as a man of his time, are able to illuminate the original discourse with up to date enquiries. These enquiries and practices determine the local memory of Laban praxis, influencing the future generations who will learn from these practitioners and have a chance to subjectivate the discourse themselves.

To conclude, the subjectivation of Laban praxis influences the genealogy of the discourse: the way in which it perpetuates and is transmitted to future generations. This has shaped the history and still shapes the present scape of practices in the local sphere. Based on the influential work of the three practitioners investigated, in Brazil Laban materialises and is disseminated as an educational practice, as dance theatre, as somatics and as an academic research tool.<sup>26</sup>

### **Conclusion: Contemporary Laban Practices**

This chapter discussed the work of the Brazilian practitioners in light of Laban's own working principles. The connection established between them creates a bridge between past and present as well as a chance to look at contemporary practices in relation to Laban's original discourse and the overall field of knowledge Laban projected.



Understanding the work of each practitioner as a subjectivation of Laban praxis allowed me to consider their practices as contemporary perspectives on Laban's discourse. Their individual modes of subjectivation broaden the agenda of Laban's discourse in relation to its founding principles and concerns and allows us to consider the work of the Brazilian artists as contemporary practices of Laban's discourse.

This perspective grants mobility to the scholarship, not confining it to an objectification of its past and original configuration (when Laban was in charge) but allowing it to actualise itself and become contemporary through the work of active practitioners. In fact, the subjectivation of Laban knowledge might be responsible for keeping Laban's discourse alive as a discipline of practice and research in a pattern of transformation, actualisation and change. In other words subjectivation of Laban praxis develops a 'crystal pattern' of the discourse that 'transforms itself while repeating itself (or reconstructing)', while multiplying itself on the difference and paradoxically defined as its own *modus operandi* (Fernandes, 2014c: 80).

Despite the diversity of the scholarship offered by Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda, their artistic orientation reveals a shared point of convergence in their work. Interestingly, and like Laban, they have all departed from an artistic practice to converge a range of disciplines such as academic research, dance pedagogy and social transformation. As discussed in this chapter it seems that Laban praxis itself may have incited such a point of departure, which once again links their work to Laban's founding principles. The integration of their artistic practice into social and educational activities also follows Laban's lifetime concerns.

Setting the above discussion in relation to Rolnik's anthropophagic subjectivation reveals the work of the Brazilian practitioners as an incorporation of Laban praxis and at the same time a possibility of retro-contamination of the field with their individual discourse. This characterises the practitioners' anthropophagic practices as being 'donor and receiver of forms' (Vieira, 1998: 95) where they not only receive Laban's discourse but also offer their subjectivation as renewed versions of praxis to the rest of the world.

This framework suggests new perspectives to the general field itself where contemporary discourses become representative of or even a surrogation of Laban praxis'.

The perspective developed here also fosters an understanding of the Brazilian contemporary Laban praxis in terms of Williams's (1977) theories of emerging, residual or dominant culture in relation to Laban's original discourse. This viewpoint promotes debate over emerging epistemologies and their relationship to Laban praxis. Williams's cultural framework provides an understanding of the type of contribution offered by each individual, clarifying how their work links to or has moved beyond Laban's original agenda.

Colin Counsell and Roberta Mock point out that it is through the emerging practices (and repertoire) of Laban's discourse that the scholarship is articulated to fit contemporary concerns: 'the repertoire is the domain of cultural process, and therefore the arena in which acts of resistance can take place' (Counsell and Mock, 2009: 8). For this reason, the discourse that emerged from the work of the Brazilians investigated challenges the heritage of Laban praxis in relation to its international scope, functions and interactions. It also examines the ways in which Laban's discourse can be consolidated into individual practices as subjectivations of the discourse.

The product of the Brazilian mode of subjectivation, along with the unique understanding that comes from it, not only determines contemporary Laban-related practices in the country, but also informs the general scholarship of Laban studies. Clearly, the understanding of how Laban praxis evolved in a postcolonial environment such as Brazil suggests new ways of looking into the scholarship and the canons being developed worldwide.

In this way, the analysis developed in this chapter offers a possibility to negotiate local developments and uses of Laban praxis, recognising emerging, residual or dominant practices as part of or even substitute (surrogation) for Laban scholarship itself. Through this I discussed and proposed the inclusion of the Brazilian artists in the same circle of scholars-practitioners who have been internationally recognised as having advanced or gone 'beyond' Laban's epistemology. This incorporation (or even admittance) challenges

power/knowledge structures which currently assign the title of 'beyond Laban' developments to the European and United States cohort. This awakens the possibility of having marginalised individuals of third and fourth generations of Laban practitioners acknowledged by the international community of Laban practitioners. With these issues in mind I now turn to draw a conclusion to this thesis, reviewing the Brazilian Labanscape of practices in relation to authorship structures present in the field.

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#### Notes to Chapter Seven:

<sup>1</sup> There are a number of authors who have already examined and debated Foucault's concept of subjectivation. Among them are Harrer (2005) who analysed the continuity and development of ideas of subjectivation in Foucault's scholarship; Kelly (2009) who explored Foucault's turn towards the subject, discussing it in relation to debates by Butler, Althusser, Deleuze, Zizek and Weberman; and Han (2006) who unpacks the history of Foucault's discussions on subjectivity. My intention is not to engage with the discussion held over Foucault's body of knowledge, but rather to take the concept and apply it directly to the context of this research.

<sup>2</sup> This is already a well-established paradigm within the community and the field of Laban Studies, as discussed in Chapter One.

<sup>3</sup> A search in the *International Bibliography of Theatre and Dance* on 10th of October 2014 has identified 49 references which include the words dance and subjectivity. Most of the articles are dated after the turn of 21st century, showing that the topic is a recent discussion in the field of dance studies.

<sup>4</sup> In Portuguese the term is spelled *antropofagia*.

<sup>5</sup> Faubion (2012: 75) explains that Foucault's mode of subjectivation is an ethical domain. For Foucault, mode of subjectivation is one of four interrelated modes of ethical practices: 'mode of subjectivation is the form with which the different parts or aspects of one's self are arranged. It is the model that fashions or moulds one's self into a distinctive style of existence.' (Gabardi, 2001: 77).

<sup>6</sup> Other theories that circulate in cultural studies discourses also refer to processes of cultural appropriation. Among them are acculturation, indigenisation, hybridisation transculturation and so forth. Their definitions, however, do not entirely cover the meaning of Brazil's cultural (colonial/post-colonial) characteristics. Although they are all categories of appropriation Littlejohn and Foss (2009: 968) explain that they demonstrate differences such as: transculturation involves multiple acts of appropriation including process where the interaction of different cultural forms generates new ones, resulting in the synthesis of new cultural genres; hybridisation is a form of transculturation that resembles the fusion of cultural forms; thus indigenisation reveals the transformation of non-dominant cultural forms with imported or imposed (dominant) cultural elements converting its original meanings, function and features (*idem*); acculturation on the other hand is when individuals learn different cultures, adding different characteristics to its own subjectivity (Organista, 2010: 105). In this sense Anthropophagy could be understood as part of a process of acculturation, but with specific local characteristics, which, as Rolnik (2002: 15) advises, claims a freedom to interpret (digest) the culture acculturated or appropriated. Differing from the other models, anthropophagy does not follow a fixed pattern of appropriation. Rather it is a metaphor and a strategy which is mobile and directly dependent on the individual (subjectivity) who appropriates from external knowledge. It is an appropriation without a commitment to both the form and the strategies of appropriation that it encompasses. Therefore, these differences reveal the reason that anthropophagy differs from these other concepts and has been chosen as a representation of the processes of appropriation here debated. The use of anthropophagy is sustained making reference to its origin in Brazilian artistic practices.

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<sup>7</sup> This is particularly apparent in the chronology of Fernandes's scholarship. For example, the periods in which she revealed major epistemological changes in her praxis towards therapy scholarship are also related to the diagnosis of her son's condition. Not only through the analysis of her scholarship but during our encounters she often mentioned her quest to understand and act in favour of her son's condition. Her investigation of different therapeutic procedures, techniques and theories are evident in her praxis, manifesting the process of subjectivation she developed.

<sup>8</sup> In the scholarship that is related to Laban's discourse I have not encountered such a status of appropriation as Rengel's statement. In fact, in my experience with classes of different Laban-practitioners, despite the fact that each one seems to teach their own method of Laban praxis, the level of appropriation and transformation of the discourse is never made clear.

<sup>9</sup> Laban's working principles are not a clear and well-resolved topic for the community of Laban practitioners. On 20th of September 2014 I emailed 'Labantalk' a discussion list of Laban scholars (which I have seen is accessed by a large variety of Laban practitioners of all strands of practice including major names in the area) administrated by the Ohio State University (USA) to enquire about Laban's general working principles. From this question I had two responses from well-known practitioners and both of them pointed to principles which belong to Laban's theories such as: Symmetry and Asymmetry, Stability and Mobility, and Exertion and Recuperation. From these replies I understood first of all that Laban's general working principles are not clear to the community of practitioners. Second I was surprised by the lack of replies, which for me revealed the lack of community engagement of the Laban practitioners, who insist in not sharing information or supporting peer researchers.

<sup>10</sup> Maletic (1987: 156) divides Laban's multidisciplinary influences into eight categories: theories of cognition, psychology and physical determinants of human movement; geometry and mathematics; visual arts and architecture; music theories; religious and ceremonial practices; theories of wellbeing and sports; acting and theatrical theories; and folk and popular dance traditions.

<sup>11</sup> For example, Laban Movement Analysis is particularly prone to be used in diverse situations and research, such as: Foroud and Whishaw (2006) who applied LMA to neuroscience studies related to the analysis of motion of patients with and without stroke; similarly Foroud and Pellis (2003) have used Laban's Efforts to analyse movement behaviour of rats; Bouchard and Badler (2007) have applied LMA to computer science to aid motion capture practices; Bishko (1992) has been extensively applying LMA to computer animation; Honda; (1995) has used Laban's movement analysis framework to teach oriental movement techniques such as Tai Chi Chuan; Laurence et.al. (2010) used LMA in robotics studies as key to the interpretation of emotional states in humans; Payne and collaborators (1992) described how widely Laban praxis is used in Dance Movement Therapy practices; Hamburg (1995) used Laban movement principles in sports and physical education in the coaching of athletes; Fagan, Conitz and Kunibe (1997) used Laban praxis in psychology studies to analyse types or qualities of behaviour. Finally, the Laban scholar Ed Groff (1995: 28) explains that: 'movement expression that were organized into patterns of movement in infinitely varied ways in work actions, behaviours, and dance styles in cultures all over the world' revealed that movement and thus Laban praxis is intrinsic of different knowledge domains. This is supported by the wide range of applications mentioned above, which still are just a small sample of the variety of publications circulating in different fields of study.

<sup>12</sup> A clear example of the relationship of Laban praxis with language is the version of Laban's *Choreutics* (1966) published in the United States, which had the title changed from 'Choreutics' to 'The language of movement: a guidebook to Choreutics' (Laban and Ullmann, 1974)

<sup>13</sup> Since Miranda has made reference to Deleuze's theories in her work, I suspect that when she uses the term 'intensities' she is also influenced by Deleuze's uses of the term, despite the lack of direct reference to Deleuze. According to Smith and Protevi (2013), Deleuze's 'intensity' is the characteristics of the encounter', which is also related to the French theatre director Antonin Artaud, who combined the concept of intensity to articulate what he proposed as the 'body without organs'. In fact, from Artaud's concept, Miranda took a step towards her investigation of spatial representations and conceptualised what she called the Body-without-Place (*corpo-sem-lugar*) or Topological Body. Contrasting with Laban's 'tridimensional' (and platonic) space, Miranda's Body-without-Place does not offer a similar stable (geometrical) model, being a better representation of the intensities and transformations which happen in the space (Miranda, 2008b: 88).

<sup>14</sup> My particular interest in investigating the influences of dominant discourse in Laban praxis arose when trying to understand the function of the different discourses emerging in the field of Laban studies, and their connection with the original praxis from where they emerged. This thesis does not develop in depth argument over this issue, as it would divert the course of my discussion. However I acknowledge a potential for future enquiry. In dance Studies the presence of dominant discourses

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has been the focus of recent scholarship that discusses its resonance in a variety of practices (Fortin, Vieira and Tremblay, 2009; Khoury, Martin and Rowe, 2013; Meekums, 2014; O'Flynn, Pryor and Gray, 2013; Ritenburg, 2010). This scholarship demonstrates that there is a rising interest to investigate established discourses/powers in the discipline. Yet, in Laban studies there has not been any work that raises similar issues.

<sup>15</sup> Both Body-Space and Sociochoreology have received trademark symbols in her writings.

<sup>16</sup> I have been paying particular attention to this issue since 2007 when I began my master's research in the field of Laban Studies. I have noticed that the dissemination of novel enquiry by undistinguished practitioners in the field is unusual. Written examples of the lack of propaganda of fellow practitioners is evident in the publication of Preston-Dunlop and Sayers, 2010 where the articles by Huberman (2010), Marques (2010) and Leon (2010) attempt to give overviews of local/national scopes of Laban practice, perform the exact opposite: they reinforce the false absence of work from their fellow Laban practitioners.

<sup>17</sup> Laban's dance practices facing communal festivity were widely described in his autobiography (Laban, 1975: 141-165). In addition Kew (1999) has historically detailed both the rising and decline of Laban's choir dances in face of the ruling politics of the National Socialism, which brings a great contribution to the understanding of how the practice evolved in face of local politics.

<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to note that Miranda includes the word 'gesture' to the act of making a proposal. In my opinion this demonstrates her interest and practice of working with and within a movement language.

<sup>19</sup> An example is in her own profile on the ISSUU website - a website directed at making available individual publications. See <http://issuu.com/reginamiranda> (accessed in 10/10/2014)

<sup>20</sup> Madden and Grantz (1990) have examined at Laban's epistemology and its non-dualist proposal to justify contemporary training of Laban Movement Studies. Carr (2010) embarks on an enterprise to discuss how Laban praxis, despite the dualistic theoretical argument, is in fact a non-dualistic praxis.

<sup>21</sup> These movement descriptions belong to Bartenieff's Fundamentals movement sequences and principles. See Bartenieff (1980) and Hackney (2010).

<sup>22</sup> Examples of papers of Fernandes' students where they refer to Fernandes' epistemology and not Laban can be accessed in the papers of: Busaid, 2013; Caetano, 2012; Salvador, 2012, available at the online journal repository of the UFBA Performing Arts postgraduate programme.

<sup>23</sup> While searching online databases for publications which reference Miranda's work, I noticed that, similar to Fernandes, the references involve Miranda's Body-Space scholarship and not Laban. Examples are in the publications of Vicari, 2011 and Allemand and Rocha, 2013.

<sup>24</sup> This is not a new fact, as many practitioners and scholars consider Bartenieff Fundamentals or Choreological Studies as Laban praxis. However this argument, discussion and justification is a novel finding in the field, having not been discussed by other scholars and practitioners.

<sup>25</sup> I am not arguing here that this is a unique situation to the Brazilian practices. However I could not affirm a comparison with other localities as there are no other investigations along similar lines.

<sup>26</sup> Interestingly in Brazil no one knows Laban for his notation system. This is an opposite picture of places such as for example in the academic circle of the UK where I have experienced on too many occasions while presenting my research, people who would think that Laban was purely Labanotation.

## Conclusion

Rudolf Laban introduced a modernist movement perspective that has been reverberating in the work of artists around the world. It evolved and consolidated as a body of knowledge that has been updating itself through time and space, having 'shown that the many branches to his core ideas have become established parts of the international heritage of the movement arts' (Preston-Dunlop, 1998b: 270). But who and where are these people that engage with this knowledge? Are there people practicing Laban in Brazil? Throughout my PhD research I heard this question many times in the international circle of Laban-practitioners. The quest to find Laban practitioners in Brazil and understand their individual relationship with Laban praxis was the first aim driving my research. This was followed by a thorough investigation into what they were doing and how. Finally came an interest to relate their activities to Laban's discourse in order to determine the particularities of their work.

My findings demonstrate that not only are there plenty of Laban-practices circulating in Brazil, but also that Laban's discourse has been in the country since the 1930's when Laban was still alive. I do not blame the people who questioned the existence of the discourse in Brazil, as perhaps not even Laban himself knew that his movement principles had crossed the Atlantic Ocean and travelled to the southern hemisphere to merge with Brazilian bodies and lifestyles. I cannot avoid, however, wondering why there are so many people unaware of the global scope of the field of Laban studies even when they seem to be so intrinsically engaged in the movement principles which Laban enunciated in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. If only Laban himself knew that it was through his praxis that modern dance was introduced in Brazil and is today part of the lives and activities of a broad range of local artists, pedagogues and researchers.

But what exactly are the Brazilian practitioners doing? To answer this question I engaged with the lives and work of three local artists who have been producing substantial archive and repertoire of Laban-related praxis in Brazil. While in Chapter Five, I looked at

the three case studies of Ciane Fernandes, Regina Miranda and Lenira Rengel in terms of their individual training in Laban praxis; in Chapter Six I detailed their work and the particularities that emerge out of their individual activities, drawing special attention to how their activities are organised within Laban's discourse. In the same chapter I also highlight how their backgrounds have influenced their development of Laban-related activities.

I discovered that it is not possible to articulate the locality of a practice without understanding the field's particulars. This led me to investigate not only the Brazilian landscape of Laban-related practitioners but also the general history of Laban praxis and its contemporary global network. The voice and experience of the practitioners (Brazilian and international) were indeed my primary sources, which is evidenced in my overall argument. My appraisal of Laban scholarship revealed what my experience too was already informing me: that the field is shaped by power politics that determine the memory - archive and repertoire - of its contemporary existence and practices; that the language(s) we speak influence(s) our access to the discourse; that information and archives are not easy to navigate and that each practitioner's distinct experience shapes their understanding of Laban's discourse (as discussed throughout Chapters Three and Four). Nevertheless since the beginning of Laban's own activity, his discourse has been spreading out, with hindrance or not, as archive (publications) and repertoire (embodiment), following the constant displacement of performing artists.

To support this statement, Chapter One provided an overview of the international (mostly English language) scholarship that makes reference to Laban praxis, exposing the range of its scholarship, publications and archives. I mainly pointed to issues regarding access and interpretation of sources and the particularity of each biographer or historian that published descriptive accounts of Laban's life and discourse. My encounter with the disparity of information and dispute involving different authors fostered an awareness of the fact that Laban's history relies on the stories told of his life and main achievements. This means that what is revealed in the books and biographies of Laban needs to be considered from a critical perspective that takes into account issues of access, interpretation and discussion of sources, as well as the cultural and affective involvement

of each researcher with Laban and/or his praxis. These issues not only became evident in the scholarship surveyed (Chapter One) but also in the experience of the Brazilian artists I investigated (presented throughout Chapters Three, Four, Five, Six and Seven).

Throughout this thesis I demonstrated that Laban praxis has been moving around the globe as analytical tool, somatic philosophy, pedagogical framework and therapeutic practice, suggesting international and interdisciplinary labour that involves education, movement analysis and human expression. Within this unique territory it was imperative to consider the global and local dynamics of this scholarship, taking into account its origins, developments and current practice. For instance my identification of heritages of strands of Laban practice in Chapter Four demonstrates the multiplicity of frameworks that sprouted out of Laban's discourse and were passed on through generations of practitioners in Brazil.

Along these lines, I found that Laban praxis is being transmitted through generations of practitioners as repertoire (movement practice), a concept I presented in the Introduction of the thesis. There I identified the epistemological character of Laban praxis not as fixed aesthetic form, but as a 'technique of the body' in the sense that Mauss (1973) describes the term. In Chapter Six I therefore reviewed this epistemological character of Laban praxis in the context of Rengel's use of Laban's terminologies and movement principles to train the students (notes from the field). Along similar lines, Fernandes's use of LMA to train in Bharathanatyam supports my findings:

...how could these two systems [Bharathanatyam and LMA] be integrated, and how can I learn Indian dance through the somatic, through analysis and the internal perception?... I discovered that in the Indian dance I was already applying the head and tail connection, heels-sit-bones, the diagonal, the places, everything was already there... the knowledge was already there (Fernandes, 2012a).

These examples show how Laban praxis acts as a formless practice, which is used to enhance a range of practices. I also realised (and discussed in Chapter Four) that its



absence of form and style has been an important factor in its incorporation, dissemination and migration among bodies and cultures.

Still in Chapter Four I advanced the particularities of the dissemination of Laban praxis, where I investigated the history of the transmission of Laban's discourse based on the generations of collaborators and practitioners involved with its materialisation. I found that Laban praxis has not only been transmitted through interactions between teachers and students but also through the acquisition of a technique, a movement knowledge (or awareness) that allows the practitioner to manipulate non-verbal body-movement expression according to his or her conscious intension. In fact, this understanding came from both my own systematic exercise of Laban praxis and the numerous conversations I had with Laban-practitioners (both Brazilian and international) while listening to their individual stories.

Indeed my own experience has been an on-going relevant source of data throughout. One of my aims was to engage in the field as a practitioner, gaining movement knowledge and interacting with other junior and senior artists and practitioners. This experience has enabled me to endorse the statements and narratives of the people investigated and also grasp the politics involved in the networks within the field. I developed an alterity with the people I trained with and had conversations with. In addition, the diversity of strands and practices that I experienced allowed me to gather an embodied understanding of the field and the narratives collected. This means that my experience was my way into understanding the Other, which helped me establish a framework to interpret the passion of the practitioners I encountered throughout. I realised that my own desire to become a Laban-practitioner was a mirror of the narratives and testimonies presented in Chapters Three, Five and Six.

To evaluate the ways in which Laban praxis is materialised in the 21<sup>st</sup> century I travelled back to look at the different strands of Laban praxis and how they were conveyed, through studio practice from master to disciples since Laban's own activities. Through Roach's (1996) genealogies of practice I advocated that Laban's discourse has been disseminated through practices of memory and/or through artistic embeddedness

(forgetting). I proposed that in either of these genealogies - memory or forgetting - Laban praxis continues to be transmitted generationally from one body to another or from master to student. From this historical frame I was then able to discuss how Laban praxis exists today and is expressed in the activities of Brazilian practitioners. Eva Schul's words from Chapter Three express this embeddedness:

I see now that, despite the strong influence from Hanya and Nik, both technical and choreographic, I slowly went on adapting [Laban] to the Brazilian speed, the *gingado*, the way of moving and - more deeply - the culture. My work is completely distinct from the American... I made my dance become ever more south/Brazilian and ever more mine. (Schul, 2008a).

Moreover, through the experience of the work of the Brazilian practitioners (detailed in Chapter Six) and my own, throughout the research I recognised the adaptability of Laban's praxis to a range of backgrounds, serving a variety of practices and epistemologies. The narratives of the Brazilian artists (developed in Chapter Three) support this understanding. As an illustration, Rengel feels that 'Laban found specific and ample terminologies for each one of us to express ourselves' (2008a). The pedagogue Uxa Xavier (2008) agrees, reasoning that Laban praxis is not only a knowledge but 'a powerful tool that is out there'. The pedagogue Renata Macedo Soares (2008b) and the choreographer Lia Robatto (2008) concur: 'Laban as a tool grants rich vocabulary to the artist'. But Lacava (2008) advises that among all possibilities offered by the discourse, each person needs to organise their own way of applying the knowledge to their lives and work.

Within the arrays of possibilities, the Brazilian practitioners established movement practice as imperative to the materialisation of Laban's discourse. For example I first approached Rengel's (2003) *Laban Dictionary* as a standard dictionary with entries and definitions. However, after her workshops I grasped her intention of having the publication as a form of guidance to develop movement exploration. Later, Rengel's scholarship

confirmed that practice is essential to engage with her work as she emphasised during an interview (Rengel, 2012a).

As I expanded my investigation into the field I was indeed convinced that Laban praxis is materialised only when practiced. Its archive is a reference to the embodied phenomenon of movement expression - as Laban reveals in his rhetoric, constantly drawing his thoughts from observation of behaviour and expressive movement (as in Laban, 1980). As I pointed out in the first chapter, Laban practitioners repeat that Laban praxis can only be understood when embodied. Of course I am not denying the fact that it can be thoroughly investigated through theoretical debate, as has been wisely done by Sutil (2013) and Crespi (2014). However, no matter how complex a theoretical debate is, it can only integrate Laban's praxis if the assumptions it raises are materialised in motion. Through my investigation I noticed, for example, that it was through practice that Laban praxis was shaped and grew to address contemporary concerns (as discussed in the Introduction of this thesis). I believe that theoretical discussions have not advanced Laban praxis in the way that the practitioners who embody it have done. Typical examples of this are found in the work developed by Bartenieff (1980) and Preston-Dunlop (2010), and the case studies from Chapter Five and Six support this argument. In fact, I propose that this embodied characteristic of the field may be its founding singularity, which in this way separates it from Dance Studies or Performance Studies, thus composing a field of Movement Studies.

The case studies developed in Chapters Five and Six reveal that Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda consider their embodiment and subjective incorporation of Laban praxis as practices of Laban's discourse themselves. To understand this premise, Chapter Seven introduced Foucault's concept of subjectivity and the Brazilian model of cultural appropriation - anthropophagy (Andrade, 1990). These standpoints revealed that each practitioner focussed on a particular aspect of Laban praxis, thus engendering a contemporary perspective on the practice. I argue that through the practitioners' anthropophagic subjectivation, their background becomes critical for the characterisation and maintenance of the memory of Laban's heritage in Brazil.

According to my analysis presented in Chapter Six, the selected practitioners hold an in depth understanding of Laban's discourse, which promotes Laban's heritage in Brazil. This is because their work repeats recurring patterns of the field, maintaining Laban's epistemology as the main framework. Thus, in Chapter Seven I proposed that if a practitioner is addressing Laban praxis and following Laban's main working principles (McCaw, 2011), his or her work could then be defined as integrating Laban's discourse. This is because Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda have addressed a triad of Laban praxis - art, research and social concerns. With this I suggest that their concerns respond to Laban's discourse as their diverse pathways arrived at similar axial points to Laban's praxis itself.

To support my discussion, I compared the contemporary practices of Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda to Laban's own epistemology. It has been advocated by Maletic (1987), Dörr (2008) and Crespi (2014) that Laban praxis is composed of dialogues with modern European scholarship of its time (located in the turn of the twentieth century). Thus, following this epistemology, Laban-related practices should necessarily connect movement practice/observation with contemporary theoretical concerns of various disciplines. In this sense, Bradley (2009: 88) highlights that Laban's theoretical stimuli emerged from physics, philosophy, medicine and psychology as well as cultural practices and behaviour. Then, Chapters Six and Seven demonstrate how Brazilian practitioners have been employing similar patterns to build their scholarship, thus pairing their work with Laban's own Art of Movement epistemology.

### **Practicing the Research: Applying Laban to Investigate Laban**

To investigate the field of Laban studies and its specific realm in Brazil I combined oral history and ethnographic methodologies, as described in Chapter Two. Taking a qualitative approach to my research, I made use of methods of interview, participant observation (to collect data) and grounded research (to analyse it). Within this framework

I engaged with my enquiry and developed a critical perspective. As an ethnographic activity, this research offered a unique perspective on issues that concern global and local (Brazilian) labour. Alongside the work of Hwang (2013) this thesis has contributed to generate general and lived understandings that have not yet been developed by the field's practitioners and historians.

My decision to address the repertoire of Laban praxis - through oral history and embodied ethnography - moved me away from the objectification that results when practice becomes archive. In this sense I followed Elswit (2008: 62), who argues that when practices are reduced to their archive they become objectified. Equally I avoided the objects of the archive to accept the living practices of today, which mirror Laban's framework of establishing contemporary dialogues between movement practice and research.

Foucault's history genealogy critique was crucial in helping me articulate a 'history of the present'. Foucault himself had a continuous interest in the 'idea of using history as a means of critical engagement with the present' (Garland, 2014: 367). In order to draw a perspective of the present I had to retrieve the past and understand how the history of the transmission of Laban praxis informs today's practices. In fact this is exactly what Foucault intended with his genealogy: an 'effective history', whose 'intent is to problematize the present by revealing the power relations upon which it depends and the contingent processes that have brought it into being' (Garland, 2014: 372). In this sense, Foucault's critique informed this research, illuminating issues of representation of the past, authorship, subjectivity and power.

Throughout Chapter Two, in addition to discussing the methods applied I also pointed to the politics of access and how I assumed a double position of an outsider and insider practitioner. Most importantly my aim was not to overlook Laban praxis as either solely a practice or as theories and archival documents. I focussed on revealing it as a consolidation of body movement and conceptualisation, not only of the practitioners investigated but also in my own research framework. As a practitioner myself I had an urge to experience the field both in its practical and its theoretical dynamics. Similarly, I

found that Laban praxis incites this framework, as it is a knowledge system that concomitantly articulates human movement - expressive or behavioural - with a range of human, biological and scientific theories.

But how could a historical-ethnographical research be practiced in terms of becoming an embodied experience for the researcher? This question was dispersed throughout the entire research, as I attempted to broaden my involvement in the field through a variety of practices: from my own weekly studio sessions to workshops and exposure to a range of events focussed on the debate around Laban's discourse, I was able to experiment with Laban praxis in its theoretical and practical levels (most of the time combined together). These experiences are detailed in Appendix 3.

My attempt to experience the field of enquiry assumed both historical and ethnographical investigations as practices of research. Despite the fact that research, even in the arts, 'is usually constituted by the preference of theory above practice' (Rasmussen, 2014: 22), my decision to combine them followed a 'paradigmatic shift' in qualitative enquiry that has been emerging in educational research, social science, and arts scholarship (Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, and von Savigny, 2001). In fact, this paradigm has been inherent in Laban's own discourse from the beginning of his career in the early 1910's. Bradley (2009: 90) recalls that the 'reconciliation' of theory and practice is 'rooted' in the history of Laban praxis. Certainly, to consolidate his praxis Laban continuously combined his observation of human behaviour with a wide range of artistic, philosophical and scientific theories, as well as the movement experiments of his pupils. With this premise in mind, I strived to reconcile practice and theory, allowing them to continuously inform one another throughout, developing an epistemological thinking from within Laban praxis.

This epistemological framework was achieved by combining methods that involved the experience in the research (my own and that of the practitioners investigated), inciting a process of experiential knowing into the research (Bacon, 2006). Rasmussen (2014: 26) clarifies that experiential knowing allows a direct encounter with the phenomenon investigated:

where one experiences the presence of the other through body, emotions and imagination. This is knowing through participative and empathic involvement in something of which I am a part and from which we are at the same time detached.

When taking a position as a practical researcher I follow Elswit (2008: 63) who, in a comparable history genealogy context, acknowledges and further embraces the data's non-coherent potential. This offered me an alternative access to the data collected (which in my case were the interviews and experiences in the field), fostering new connections and interpretations of the facts I gathered (my sources).

In addition to the historiographic and ethnographic methods I also engaged in periodic laboratory practices in the studio. These sessions had two main aims: firstly to develop an embodied knowledge of the strands of Laban praxis through experiments with free improvisation on selected topics of my research; and secondly to generate an embodiment of my enquiries and to allow me to practice their questions, including my theoretical findings. However, I have chosen not to include this experimental process in the thesis as it proved to be a whole research study in itself and is therefore most likely to provide a territory for further research enquiry.

Nevertheless the role of the practice in this research and in the thesis as a whole lies in the way it has continuously supported and generated understandings in the field of Laban studies. In this sense, it never aimed to demonstrate the research but to provide embodied knowledge and dynamic feedback to the enquiries I raised throughout.

### **Authorship in Laban's Discourse: Who is the Author?**

After presenting a critical overview of Laban scholarship and investigating the particularities of its dissemination and current practice in Brazil, I arrived at an enquiry that problematises authorship in contemporary Laban praxis, and which I wish to address as I

approach the end of this project. To which extent can Laban still be considered the single author of the scholarship that carries his name?

In Chapters One and Four, I highlighted the fact that Laban's discourse received substantial contributions from his collaborators and fellow practitioners, depending on each practitioner's individual interests and local/cultural conditions. Again, Laban was never alone when conceiving and/or establishing his scholarship. This suggests that what we know as Laban's legacy should not be attributed to a single authorial mind. So, why not acknowledge the contribution of his collaborators? And what happens when we do acknowledge that Laban developed his praxis alongside the bodies-minds of his colleagues?

This discussion was established in Chapter One when I rejected the use of the term legacy replacing it with the terms discourse and praxis to relate to the practical and theoretical material that sits under Laban's name. The terms legacy, discourse and praxis raise questions around the notions of canon, ownership and consequently authorship within Laban's framework. To develop this point further, I once again turn to Foucault's (1998) and his critique of authorship.

Foucault conceives that an epistemological authorship considers the author as a 'a genial creator of a work in which he deposits with infinite wealth and generosity, an inexhaustible world of significations' (Foucault, 1998: 221). As developed in this thesis, Laban's collaborators had a substantial role in the development of his philosophy, as Preston-Dunlop has previously articulated (1998b: 271–2). For instance, Laban's industrial analysis was consolidated alongside the practices of Warren Lamb (Reisel, 2008) and others amongst his pupils who, following Laban's indications, were exercising Effort analysis in English industries, as recollected by Preston-Dunlop (Reisel, 2008). On the other hand Geraldine Stephenson (Reisel, 2008) recalls her own activities taking over Laban's classes with actors and discussing with him the developed practices. Bodmer (unpublished interview, NRCD) also remembers having led choreographic practices under Laban's name in England, where in fact she was the one choreographing and not Laban. Wigman (1975: 34) clarifies: 'he [Laban] always needed people who would take up his



ideas and put them to practical use'. She described her own experience of exhaustive studio sessions with Laban while together they built the basis of Laban's Choreology. Laban injured himself in 1926 (Laban, 1975: 183) and terminated his career as a performer, which suggests he was then unable to materialise his conceptual thinking. Based on this I argue that it is impossible not to acknowledge the participation and responsibility of the practitioners (bodies) who followed Laban's activities, and who more often than not were acting under his name. But still, despite these experiences, Laban's discourse or legacy continues to be assigned to the ownership of a 'single mind'.

This discussion has already been touched upon in different texts, but never discussed in depth. Notably, Dörr (2008) and Preston-Dunlop (1998b) described in their biographies how from the beginning of his career Laban was followed and 'assisted' by a number of people who were intensively involved in investigating movement ideas that were said to emerge from Laban's mind. Thus, how could Laban be the 'author-god' (Barthes, 1977: 146) and single owner of a great legacy that sits under his name, especially when his work comes from the practice of others? Why are the bodies that collaborated to materialise Laban's philosophy and allow it to become praxis not acknowledged? And what would happen if we did acknowledge them?

When discussing the *Death of the Author*, Roland Barthes (1977) proposes a multi-dimensional authorship, blending several mind-bodies together. Similarly, I associate this multiplicity with the composition of Laban's discourse when acknowledging the bodies that collaborated with Laban. Indeed, the bodies of Laban's collaborators have promoted a 'plurality of interpretations' (Barthes, 1977: 148) of Laban praxis that immediately became the materiality of Laban's discourse. In this case, authorship is reduced and new concepts of creative collectivity are invited in.

In Chapter One, my use of the term praxis to refer to Laban's frameworks established that theories and practices merge together in a single system. So, when using the concept of praxis throughout this thesis I am not referring to Laban's theories or practices but their somatic and interdependent oneness. On the other hand, I suggest that the term discourse offers a chance to acknowledge the contribution of Laban's

collaborators and the multiple bodies (and consequently interpretations) that helped compose of his working framework. In these terms I could display the participation of a number of people in the consolidation of the Laban heritage. In addition, the use of discourse also allowed me to accept the work of the Brazilians as part of this framework and consequently as bodies-minds of Laban praxis.

With these concepts in operation and following Foucault (Foucault, 1998: 222), I revised and reversed the questions to be asked throughout the research. Rather than maintaining the initial proposal, which involved the mapping of Laban's legacy in Brazil and the authenticity of Laban's discourse in the work of the Brazilians, I reframed the enquiries to investigate the modes of the current existence of the discourse: how it can circulate; who can incorporate it and how; and whether Laban's framework offers space for the emergence of subjects. Considering these questions within the Brazilian scenario, I was able to suggest answers that not only provided a map of local practices but also fostered an analytical survey of the field and its dynamics in contemporary practice. After analysing the work of the Brazilian practitioners (Chapter Six) and how it has been evolving in the country (Chapter Three), and worldwide (Chapters One and Four), I propose that Laban praxis exists in the interpretation, replication and renovation, or subjectivity, of each practitioner in action, then and now. These varied modes of subjectivation lead to the 'birth of the reader' (Barthes, 1977): the one who reads a framework adding an individual interpretative physicality, generating a repertoire of the heritage and perpetuating its praxis in a contemporary fashion.

Employing the birth of the reader and Foucault's critique in the greater scenario of Laban's discourse indicates that past (first generation) and present practitioners were (and are) responsible for more than the dissemination of authorial knowledge. Laban's collaborators not only contributed to the materialisation and transport of Laban's insights, but their individual subjectivity acted as a condition for the framework's existence throughout history and in contemporary movement studies, as I have demonstrated through the activities of Fernandes, Rengel and Miranda in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

This consideration transforms Laban, 'the author', into Laban as a discourse composed of theory and practices of collaborating body-minds.

The analysis of the collected data is only the beginning of a discussion on the substance, existence and authorship of Laban praxis. This discussion allows for further consideration of emerging practices that involve Laban's framework as well as power/knowledge articulations of the discourse. This could be a fertile ground for future discussions, which would generate precious material in movement, dance and performance studies scholarship as well as bring new insights to the field of Laban studies.

### **Contemporary Laban Praxis: Laban in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

So what could be taken as Laban praxis today in the context of Brazil and in a global sense? Considering the plurality of Laban's collaborative praxis, what could we make of its contemporary materialisation? The study of the Brazilian artists has allowed me to develop a broad perspective of the field of Laban studies which characterises it as the merging of a cross-cultural, somatic, theatrical and pedagogical practice which becomes a praxis according to individual embodiment and subjectivation of Laban's philosophy or principles.

From the beginning of its existence, Laban's discourse has been updating itself according to the scholarship that became available to him and his collaborators. In fact, Bradley (2009: 36) reminds us that Laban never owned his intellectual property. Laban praxis was initially organised from the observation of the dynamics of everyday life, both individual and collective:

The great rhythmic laws that we clearly see inner emotions, movements, and thoughts, govern all these areas. Conscious observation of these processes allows anyone in his own time to recognize the rhythm of his life and to strengthen and command it (Laban in Dörr, 2008: 38).

This characteristic allowed Laban praxis to be constantly modernising itself according to theories emerging in different disciplines. Laban praxis was developed through a cross-fertilisation with modernist cultural, political and scientific ideas (Maletic, 1987). These paradigmatic ideas remain as part of the body of knowledge of Laban's discourse. However the paradigms themselves have changed; so why should the praxis not follow these dynamics, as Laban himself suggests in the quote above?

Bradley has emphasised the applicability of Laban's original praxis, stating that the scholarship continues to speak to a number of movement practices nowadays:

From a morning stretch to a hip-hop spin; from a politician's gesture to an infant's crawling patterns; from standards in learning in the arts to observation of psychiatric patients, Laban's legacy continues to inform and challenge us in performance and everyday life. (Bradley, 2009: 88)

While it is still possible to apply Laban's original praxis today (Preston-Dunlop, 1998b: 273), the work of the Brazilian practitioners has suggested that through interdisciplinary dialogues Laban praxis can be moulded to contemporary research without losing its founding principles. Not only is Laban praxis of 'utility' to 21<sup>st</sup> century interdisciplinary practices (Bradley, 2009: 88) but I argue that 21<sup>st</sup> century disciplines are even able to update Laban praxis and make it a contemporary discourse.

Other researchers have been questioning the integration of contemporary insights into modernist theatrical frameworks. For example Roach (1993) questions whether Stanislavsky method practitioners have taken into account contemporary epistemologies that revise the structure of the method. However, in the case of Laban, I argue that Laban praxis today is not the practice of a modernist thinking but a contemporary revision with up-to-date theories or what I defined in Chapter Seven as emerging epistemologies of Laban's discourse. Despite their emergent nature, these epistemologies constitute Laban's discourse today.

## Final Remarks

To conclude, in addition to giving both a general and a detailed view of the scape of Laban-related practices in Brazil, my findings also contribute to debates in the overall field of Laban studies. Interestingly the emerging Laban practices in Brazil challenge the understanding of the overall field and its contemporary discourse. In addition, the Brazilian practices have allowed me to question the transmission of Laban praxis based on the different strands of Laban's discourse and the practices of memory developed by its practitioners. This allows us to perceive Laban praxis not only in the archive knowledge and memory (embodied or not) of fixed analytical frameworks, but, most of all, in the emerging associations of the discourse and embodied forgetting of artistic craft.

Again, starting from the work of the Brazilian practitioners I interrogated the relevance of the concept of Laban's legacy and how this terminology hinders the contemporaneity of the discourse. Noland (2013: 86) explains that 'to preserve a legacy is implicitly an attempt to perpetuate a certain look and certain praxis from one generation to the next (and the next and the next and the next...)'. This preservation impetus is exactly what I observe when the term is evoked in the field of Laban studies, which leads to practices that are attached to modernist frameworks from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, could emerging practices fit under such legacy-built framework? Noland goes on to argue that:

the word "legacy" implies something material that is left behind, something tangible deliberately bequeathed and deliberately assumed. The notion of "legacy" presupposes the perseverance of an essential core, and preserving this core requires technologies of storage, reproduction, and transmission as well as institutional support (*idem*).

The pattern that Noland proposes matches the politics involved in Laban's legacy. Yet, Laban praxis' epistemology opposes the legacy plan to preserve a framework. It also interrupts the practices of memory that take Laban praxis through time and space through

memory and forgetting. In fact, the impetus to preserve praxis opposes Laban's epistemology (that develops links with its surrounding interdisciplinary and contemporary realm), as outlined in the Introduction chapter. In addition, with the use of the terms discourse and praxis I hope have opened Laban's heritage to its contemporary materiality and original epistemology. In this sense the three case studies provide examples of how Laban praxis exists today in a specific historical, geographical and cultural scenario.

From this perspective I propose that the Brazilian artists have developed 'embodied actualisations' (Lepecki, 2010: 31) of Laban praxis. These are related to their individual 'capacity to identify in a past work still non-exhausted creative fields of 'impalpable possibilities' (*idem*). Borrowing Lepecki's approach<sup>1</sup>, this perspective allows us to see the artists as identifying in Laban praxis a 'field that concerns the possible' (Massumi in Lepecki, 2010: 31). In this way they overcome the archival form of Laban praxis, which is fixed to a time and space reality of the first half of the twentieth century, to give life to it in the twenty-first century.

While considering Laban praxis as a discourse and not as the property of an author-creator, I suggest that the discourse reshapes itself throughout time and takes the form of different practices. This offers the possibility of critique towards a whole system of ownership, offering the chance for Laban's praxis to be renewed in its chain of transmission. This consideration shifts the understanding of Laban praxis as archive (or archival practice), which is enclosed to its time and theoretical realm, to its understanding as repertoire, which is mobile and living in the activities of its current practitioners.

My particular focus on the repertoire and on the experience and embodied practices (as evidence in contemporary discourse) does not mean that I am devaluing archival research related to the discourse. Researches such as Moore (2009), Crespi (unpublished), McCaw (2011), Curtis-Jones (notes from workshops with Curtis-Jones) have not only revealed unique perspectives of Laban praxis, but also pointed to an even larger potential housed in the discourse.

Moving on to the limitations of this research, it was clearly impossible for me to engage with archive and publications from languages other than English and Portuguese. In addition, the segregation of the strands of practice and the disagreement among the practitioners and theorists made it difficult for this study to address Laban across practices. It was even reflected in the problematic of gathering data from the field in Brazil. However this was further incorporated and analysed as the existing politics of the field, which nevertheless speak of the global nature of Laban's discourse.

Further research could have included a deeper analysis of these politics in the field of Laban studies. Such research would necessitate a return to the archive to look for possible clues as to the causes of the hostility among certain practitioners of different strands of practice. In the case of Brazil, a critical analysis of the experience of the (now fading) first generation of practitioners could also contribute to this investigation. Further areas of enquiry could include an understanding of the landscape of Laban discourse in different countries in order to contrast and compare the transmission and dissemination of Laban praxis around the world, as well as assess its different scapes.

Finally I risk proposing that today, Laban praxis endures in the range of practices of its contemporary practitioners. At first glance, this could be seen as a loss to the heritage or even an 'academic self-delusion' as Copland argues (2011: 62)<sup>2</sup>. Instead, in my thesis I have demonstrated that rigorously emerging practices that follow Laban's epistemological principles actually correspond to and materialise Laban's original thinking. This confirms my hypothesis that Laban praxis evolves according to time, and is adapted through the theories, culture and bodies of each moment.

Laban's words from the beginning of his career in movement studies express his personal opinion regarding the development of thinking and the need for it to unleash from power structures:

The real revolutionaries are those who experience internal retreat from egoism and the external struggle for power, and reach towards the core of the goodness in humans which, though often hidden deep within the

soul, is always present [...] I think that the development of our ideas about movement may surely arouse some interest in the line that runs through the history of life... (Laban in Dörr, 2008: 208)

So why not attend to Laban's own proposition and allow his vision to guide the unfolding of the heritage of Laban praxis?

I don't praise myself for being a creator of words. On the contrary, I hope that my presentation is going to fall on fruitful grounds and that those more qualified than myself shall form word-structures which can give a valid language background to seeing from the point of view of dance. Thought process have to be built and improved. [...] My aim is not to establish norms and dogmas but to awaken dance insights [...] My methods might be developed or better forms might be found; the outlook on life, however, which is connected with the striving after the mastery of movement remains fundamental as long as the human race exists. (Laban in Maletic, 1987: 182)

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#### Notes to Conclusion:

<sup>1</sup> Although Lepecki's conceptualisation is related to what he calls a 'will to archive' choreographic dance forms and performances, I extended the concept and applied it to the actual archive of an individual, be it a dance form or a scholarship (in Laban's case). Lepecki identified that artworks house a creative potential (Lepecki, 2010: 45). Thus, the people who re-enact these works can choose to adopt a 'will to archive'. This means that they escape the form proposed by the choreographer and access the creative potential inherent in the work, allowing it to be materialised in the present through subjective language.

<sup>2</sup> Copeland (2011) fiercely debates Susan Fosters arguments towards the death of the (modern dance) choreographer and suggests that her argumentation towards the identity of dancers is an 'academic form of self delusion'.



## **Appendix 1**

### **Details of Interviews**

#### **1. Interviews done for my Oral History Project in 2008.**

Adalberto da Palma, interviewed by Melina Scialom over email.

Andrea Jabour, interviewed by Melina Scialom. April, 2008, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Analívia Cordeiro, interviewed by Melina Scialom. February, 2008. Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Ângela Loureiro, interviewed by Melina Scialom. February, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Ciane Fernandes, interviewed by Melina Scialom. September, 2008. Salvador, Brazil.

Cibele Sastre, interviewed by Melina Scialom. April, 2008, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Cilo Lacava, interviewed by Melina Scialom. February, 2008. Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Cybele Cavalcanti, interviewed by Melina Scialom. February, 2008. Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Denise Telles, interviewed by Melina Scialom. February, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Eva Schul, interviewed by Melina Scialom through email.

Flavia Valle, interviewed by Melina Scialom. April, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Isabel Marques, interviewed by Melina Scialom. February, 2008. Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Joana Lopes, interviewed by Melina Scialom, through email.

Juliana Moraes, interviewed by Melina Scialom. February, 2008. Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Julio Mota, interviewed by Melina Scialom, through email.

Lenira Rengel, interviewed by Melina Scialom. February, 2008. Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Lenora Lobo, interviewed by Melina Scialom, through email.

Lia Robatto, interviewed by Melina Scialom. September 2008. Salvador, Brazil.

Maria Mommensohn, interviewed by Melina Scialom. February, 2008. Sao Paulo, Brazil

Mariangela Melcher, interviewed by Melina Scialom, through email.

Marília de Andrade, interviewed by Melina Scialom. April, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Marta Soares, interviewed by Melina Scialom. February, 2008. Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Maristela Lima, interviewed by Melina Scialom. April, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Marina Martins, interviewed by Melina Scialom. April, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Marisa Naspoline, interviewed by Melina Scialom. April, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Regina Miranda, interviewed by Melina Scialom. April, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Renata Macedo Soares, interviewed by Melina Scialom. February, 2008. Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Rogério Migliorini, interviewed by Melina Scialom, through email.

Solange Arruda, interviewed by Melina Scialom. February, 2008. Sao Paulo, Brazil

Telma Gama, interviewed by Melina Scialom, through email.

Uxa Xavier, interviewed by Melina Scialom. February, 2008. Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Yolanda Amadei, Interviewed by Melina Scialom. February, 2008. Sao Paulo, Brazil.

## **2. Narrative interviews completed for the ethnography**

Interview with Ciane Fernandes

Interview by Melina Scialom

Date collected: 09/12/2012

Place: Lençois, Bahia, Brazil

Language: Portuguese

Translation and translation: Melina Scialom

Duration: 84 minutes

Interview with Lenira Rengel

Interview by Melina Scialom

Date collected: 30/11/2012

Place: Salvador, Bahia, Brazil

Language: Portuguese

Transcription and translation: Melina Scialom

Duration: 59 minutes

Interview with Regina Miranda

Interview by Melina Scialom

Date collected: 18/03/2013

Online via Skype

Language: English

Transcription: Melina Scialom

Duration: 132 minutes

## Appendix 2

### Oral History and Narrative Interview Questionnaires

Questionnaire for Narrative Interviews, October 2012 (English and Portuguese)



School of Arts: Dance  
Nodus Centre  
Guildford, Surrey  
GU2 7XH

#### Structure of the oral Narrative Interview

Investigator: Melina Scialom

Responsible supervisor: Dr. Efrosini Protopapa

Research: "Developments of Rudolf Laban's theories in Brazil"

Questions to be asked:

1. Could you please introduce yourself, speaking about who you are and what do you do in general in your artistic/academic/professional career.
2. I would like to know more details of your work. How do you explain what you have been developing or working on.
3. How did you proceed with your investigations? Through practice; teaching; a group; research; individually... And how did it come about to become what it is today?
4. Why did you make these choices? Or to follow these pathways that you have described?
5. Do you think that the fact that you are Brazilian and have been living in Brazil has influenced your thoughts and practices? Do you have any idea of how would it have influenced?!
6. Would you like for something to be different or to have been different? Why? Would that have changed the course of the work that you have developed?
7. Would you like to add something that I have not asked and you would like to say about your work.

### **Estrutura da Entrevista Narrativa**

Investigador: Melina Scialom

Orientador Responsável: Dr. Efrosini Protopapa

Pesquisa: "Desenvolvimentos das teorias e praticas de Rudolf Laban no Brasil"

#### **Perguntas:**

1. Por favor, gostaria que você se introduzisse falando sobre quem você é, o que você faz em geral com relação à sua carreira de artista/profissional/acadêmica.
2. Eu gostaria de saber mais sobre seu trabalho. Como você explicaria o que você vem desenvolvendo e em que vem trabalhando..
3. Como você procedeu com suas investigações? Através da prática; do ensino; de um grupo de dança; individualmente, em colaboração... E como seu trabalho veio a se tornar o que é hoje?
4. Porque você fez estas escolhas? Ou como você seguiu nestes caminhos que você descreveu?
5. Você acha que o fato de você ser brasileira e ter vivido no Brasil influenciou seus pensamentos e sua prática? Você tem alguma ideia de como teria influenciado?
6. Você gostaria que algo fosse diferente ou tivesse sido diferente? Por que? Isto teria modificado o percurso do que você desenvolveu?
7. Você gostaria de acrescentar algo sobre o seu trabalho ou sobre a sua história relacionada ao trabalho que eu não tenha mencionado ou perguntado?

**Oral History Questionnaire, July 2008 (Portuguese)**

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DA BAHIA – UFBA  
PÓS GRADUAÇÃO EM ARTES CÊNICAS – PPGAC  
JULHO 2008

Questionário-roteiro de entrevista para pesquisa de Mestrado de Melina Scialom com orientação da Profa. Dra. Ciane Fernandes intitulada:  
“ONDE ESTÁ LABAN NO BRASIL: UM MAPEAMENTO”.

As seguintes questões tem por objetivo traçar um histórico entre a vida, a formação e a atuação dos indivíduos pesquisados e a sua relação artística/ acadêmica com as teorias deixadas por Rudolf Laban.

---

Local:

Data/ hora:

Nome:

**DADOS PESSOAIS E FORMAÇÃO**

**CONTATO COM AS TEORIAS DE LABAN**

Como entrou em contato/ conheceu as teorias de Rudolf Laban?

Quem as introduziu à voce?

Porque Laban/ ou o Sistema Laban? - O que te levou a buscar suas Teorias?

Como voce considera sua experiência relacionada ao trabalho com o Sistema Laban?

Quanto tempo trabalhou ou trabalha com o Sistema Laban?

Com qual parte do Sistema que voce trabalha/ ou utiliza em suas produções artísticas/ acadêmicas?

**PRODUÇÃO PESSOAL**

Como descreve seu trabalho artístico/ acadêmico

Qual a relação entre seu trabalho e o Sistema Laban?

Trabalha em parceria/ colaboração com outros artistas/ pesquisadores?

Existem registros de seus trabalhos? Onde?

Gostaria de fazer alguma colocação sobre perspectivas futuras das teorias de Laban?

**O LEGADO DE RUDOLF LABAN**

Qual sua opinião (ou qual a importância) a respeito do legado deixado por Laban para as Artes Cênicas?

O que acha/pensa sobre as associações que Laban realizou durante sua vida com teóricos de outras áreas do conhecimento?

Na sua opinião como é o panorama dos estudos das teorias de Laban no Brasil?

Voce observa alguma troca entre os artistas/ pesquisadores que trabalham com Laban no Brasil? Ou alguma troca dos brasileiros com os estrangeiros?

Como voce vê a importância em se diplomar por um centro de formação oficial? Existe alguma diferença entre a necessidade de formação no passado e no presente?

SOBRE OS ENCONTROS LABAN ANTERIORES (CASO TENHA PARTICIPADO):

Estou no Brasil à pouco tempo.

Qual a idéias inicial do Encontro?

Na sua opinião quais as repercussões destes encontros?

Como descreveria ou avaliaria estes eventos/acontecimentos?

## Appendix 3

### Survey of Experiences in the Field of Laban Studies

Considering that this research included my experience as a reference to my understanding of the field of Laban studies I find it relevant to provide a detailed account of my different encounters and training in Laban praxis, which nonetheless influenced this research.

I was introduced to Laban's discourse on the module *Principles of Movement and Dance* during my Bachelor in Dance at the State University of Campinas, UNICAMP, Brazil in 2003. The lecturer, Joana Lopes (specialised in theatre and dance education) later became my tutor and supervised my artistic practice during three years. Later in 2005 she invited me to assist her Laban related classes at UNICAMP. Also I informally translated some of Laban's texts she used in the class from English to Portuguese, as well as typed her own translation of a document on Laban's Efforts from the Italian version of Laban's *Mastery of Movement*.

Then I had two years of researching and working (from 2007 to 2009) with Professor Ciane Fernandes (who is specialised in LMA) with whom I also experienced a unique perspective of Laban praxis – that of the somatic practices. Still in Brazil I took part in Laban related workshops with Juliana Moraes (specialised in Chronological Studies), Lenira Rengel (specialised in modern educational dance), Maria Mommensohn and Uxa Xavier (who hold broad understanding of Laban praxis), Elizabeth Zimmerman (specialised in dance movement therapy, with who I had one semester of classes at UNICAMP), Marisa Lambert (specialised in strand BMC and with who I had one semester of classes at UNICAMP), and Marta Soares (specialised in LMA). Each of these practitioners offered me insight into (their understanding of) Laban's praxis which, as a result, provided me with a broad perspective of the discourse.

When I arrived in the UK in 2010, in parallel to my PhD I pursued a three years *Specialist Diploma in Choreological Studies* at Trinity Laban (from 2011 to 2014) and a *LMA and Integrated Movement Studies* foundation course with Peggy Hackney in Scotland in 2012 (40 hours). Additionally, I attended a an intensive *Summer School*



Course offered by the English Laban Guild with the Laban-practitioner and current president of the Guild, Anna Carlisle. This course offered me a different practical perspective on Laban's discourse, directly related to the tradition established by the Guild. Furthermore, I attended weekly *European Modern Dance* classes with Vivien Bridson (2014 through 2015) who bases her class in Laban's Choreology and who gave me insights into the artistic training using Laban praxis. I also had a short workshop of *Authentic Movement* with Rosa Maria Govoni. Besides I engaged in *weekly solo practices* of Laban's Choreutics and Eukinetics principles through improvised as well as structured exercises that I created myself, merging the different strands of practice I came to experience.

Overall I can state that I have been engaging in a range of levels and strands of Laban praxis since 2003. I had the opportunity to experience a vast amount of Laban-related practices from Brazilian, English and United States perspectives in intensive, long and short workshops. This experience enabled me to develop a general understanding of different strand of Laban practices which directly fed into my research.

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